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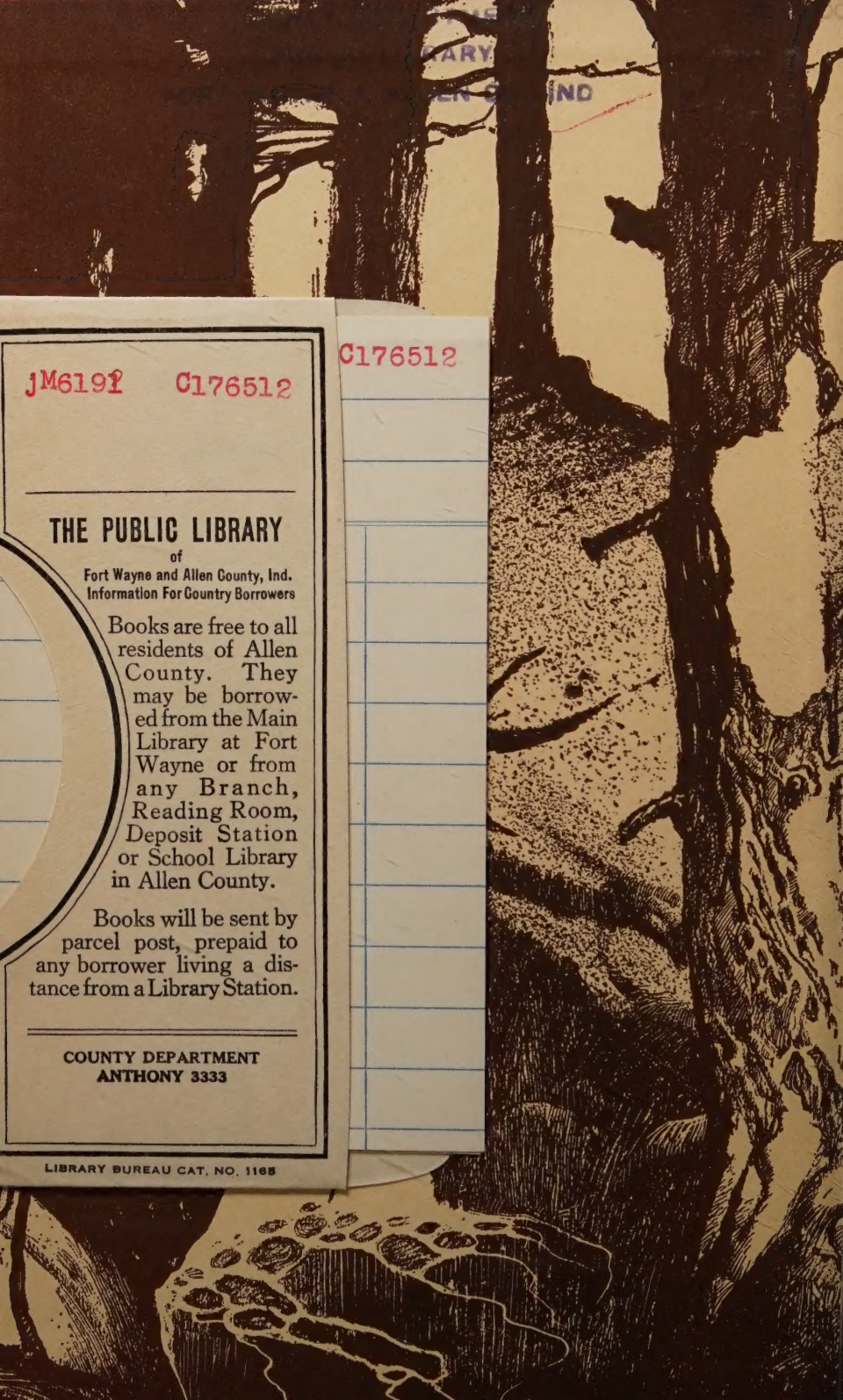

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THE LONE WOODSMAN

THE LONE WOODSMAN

by

WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

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Illustrated by

KREIGH COLLINS

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CO. SCHOOLS

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Part of this story was originally published in *Field and Stream* Magazine. Since that time, however, the story has been entirely rewritten.

Chapter I

THE RED GODS CALL

"You had better ship your canoe to Fort Frances on Rainy Lake, Dan. There seems to be a practical route from there to Lac Seul, by way of Wabigoon and Minnitaki."

Doctor Pickett, famous Smithsonian ethnologist, and his son Dan studied intently three maps spread before them. Each map was different in its details of lakes and connecting streams. The main line of the Grand Trunk Railroad was surveyed, but it ran only a short distance east of Superior Junction Station where it joined the Canadian Pacific Railroad. That part of Upper Ontario north of it was Hudson's Bay Company territory and was mapped indifferently.

"The surest way would be to make English River by the Lake of the Woods, Father," Dan said. "All three maps agree there. But it's too roundabout, and you know how difficult these big lakes are. Me for the inland route!"

Doctor Pickett's eyes twinkled. He had trained that nineteen-year-old son of his well. Since he was a boy of eight, Dan had gone with the Doctor on the easier ethnological expeditions, to study the customs and weapons—and above all, the needs—of the various Indian tribes. He had become proficient with the bow before being allowed to own even an air rifle. He could remember sitting in a canoe surrounded by duffel bags almost as big as he was, his father paddling at the bow and an Indian guide with the fascinating name of "Nishimiwog" grinning at him from the stern. Camping with just the equipment that could be packed in a canoe, caring for a canoe and portaging it had become skills to him long ago. Dan was by now a tall, rangy youth, deeply sunburned from wearing nothing but a stout pair of bathing trunks all summer. His eyes were piercing black, cheek bones high and prominent, hair an intense blue-black. There was a distinct Indian strain in him, inherited from the Arapaho grandmother who had married the plainsman Josiah Pickett. Dan had known her when he was a small boy and he was intensely proud of her. Still the Arapaho beauty, although wrinkled and aged, she had taught him much Indian lore and had told him stirring tales of the great chiefs in the days of the buffalo and tepee.

The rest of his information came from constant contact with his father's professional knowledge. There was little that the Indians made or used that Dan had not fingered, studied out, copied for his own use. His copies were crude enough, compared to fine Indian workmanship, but they served their purpose in teaching him to use his hands, to improvise, to discover many different methods of attacking the same problem.

"When you get to Osnaburgh House on Lake Saint Joseph, I want you to collect all you can from the Swamp Crees," Doctor Pickett said. "That branch of them is little known, and they must have some interesting wild-rice ceremonies. The factor at the Hudson's Bay Post there will put you in touch with the right chief. I hope that they still will be using most of their tribal equipment and building wigwams instead of using the white man's tent. They certainly live far enough from anywhere to be unspoiled."

"Yes, sir."

Dan was still poring over the maps. One map indicated that it was all plain sailing after crossing Rainy Lake. You went up the Manitou to Wabigoon Lake and then had a short portage over to Lake Minnitaki and thence into Lac Seul. The second map showed no navigable water at all for fifty miles between Rainy and Wabigoon, and it had that lake emptying into English River. The third put in some lakes but was vague about their connecting streams. It was all very

perplexing, but it only added the zest of exploration to Dan's love of the outdoors.

"Anyway, I'll make it inland, Father," he said. "Why did the early explorers reach the West by way of the Ottawa River and Lake Nipising? Because they avoided all three of the Great Lakes that way. You don't get wind-bound. I want all the time I can get with those Cree Indians."

Doctor Pickett nodded and glanced over the map. "I'll be out West with the Shoshones all this summer. Drop me a wire at Graham Station on the Canadian Pacific"—he put a finger where that railroad crossed between Minnitaki and Lac Seul —"then I'll know how you are getting on. Be careful to pick a calm day when you cross Lac Seul. The winds are northerly up there, so you'll have to hug its north shore. It ought to be easy going from there into Lake Saint Joseph. Let's see. . . ." He measured the distance from Rainy to Osnaburgh House and applied it to the scale. "Roughly, two hundred and fifty miles . . . ought to take you about two weeks. You can notify me by mail team from the Post when you get there."

"O.K., sir. There's one thing more: I'd like to take Pepper with me on this trip. May I, sir?"

Doctor Pickett looked at his son shrewdly. Secretly be gloried in Dan's strength and spirit but to let him go all alone into this wild region was somewhat disturbing. He would be fifty miles from the nearest railroad at Lac Seul; from then on farther and farther from any human help, till he reached

the Hudson's Bay Post on Lake Saint Joseph. Yet, at Dan's age, Doctor Pickett had gone alone fifteen hundred miles across Arizona and New Mexico, with no companion save his pony. He had lived with the Pueblo people and the Navaho, avoiding only the wild Apaches. Why not let Dan strike out for himself, depending only on his own courage and resourcefulness?

"Not bad—and right sporting, Son!" he said. "You take Pepper. A boy companion would only hamper you by wanting to stop to fish and hunt. You have an important ethnological study to make. I can trust you to lose no time in getting there."

Pepper rose with a doggy yawn at the mention of his name. In the Minnesota home he was always allowed to sleep before the log fire before being sent out to his kennel for the night. Pepper had been with the Pickett's since Dan was twelve. He was "just dog"; smart and alert, as so many mongrels are. There was a strain of Husky in him, some shepherd, a large percentage of hound. He was an ideal all-around dog: nose enough to follow a hot trail, fight enough to tackle anything on four legs, and body enough to make good at it, for he weighed some sixty pounds. Pepper walked over to be petted. He knew that they were talking about him. His name spoken aloud was enough to arouse him at any time.

"You bet we'll be pals on this trip, Pep-dog!" Dan scratched him behind his shepherd-dog ears. Pep nudged his

way in closer, enjoying the rubbing. His deep brown eyes affectionately looked up into Dan's black ones. His bushy tail wagged and waved approval of everything.

"You two will make a good team," said the Doctor. "Best companion in the world, Dan! He won't argue with you, nor want to draw back at the first hardship and give up. Now for your outfit; we'd best sort out what we'll need right now."

The Pickett living-room had become almost a museum of Indian arts and crafts, supplemented by game heads and old-time weapons. There was a gun cabinet and a rod cabinet and various closets containing outdoor equipment. Dan tumbled the camping equipment out on the floor. Father and son fell to selecting their outfits from the well-worn and beloved gear. The Doctor's pile accumulated saddlery, a bedroll, canteens, an over-sized medical kit which he used in doctoring sick Indians, and a powerful rifle. Dan rooted a pack harness and tump strap from the leather goods, and then picked out two stout, brown, waterproof duffel bags. Into them went his red all-wool Hudson's Bay blanket, a light tent, a dry-bag containing thick socks of bright hues, and a sleeping toque. It would be cold in the North Country by the middle of August, freezing by September.

The other bag he crammed with paraffined muslin food sacks—rice, cornmeal, sugar, tea, milk powder, soup powders, dried fruits, deer-meat pemmican, salt. On top of them went his candle lantern, ammunition bag, tackle bag,

toilet kit, and a pair of bathing trunks. Tying tight the pucker strings, Dan strapped the two bags side by side in the leather carrying harness and was ready to hit the trail. From the cabinets, he took his pet trout and bass rods and a light "hi-power" rifle that shot a supplementary cartridge for small game. Thrusting them into their cases, he called the express office and arranged about shipping the canoe.

"Just two more hours till traintime, Dad!" he said. "May I help you?"

"I wish you would, Son," the Doctor wheezed. "This horse stuff is heavy. I can't check it; but we'll get the baggage man to stow it for me. Suppose I call a cab and we'll blow ourselves to a lift down to the station?"

Dan's canoe left the yard within the hour. It was a light guide's model, seventeen feet long, weighing sixty pounds. A sticker went on it, and the truck driver assured him that it would go on the same train that he did.

"Can't take them paddles, though, Mister," said the man.

Dan added them to his pile. He now wore an outdoor shirt and loden-cloth trousers, with the moccasin socks underneath them. A sheepskin jacket for cold weather had to be carried. They piled the mountain of duffel into the cab, locked up the house, and were off for the station.

The Doctor's train came roaring in first. Dan helped him pile in the western outfit through the door of the baggage car. They gripped hands in a swift good-by.

"See you some time in November, Son," said the Doctor. "Better come out by dog team. The factor can ship your canoe and collections down to Graham's in the spring. Watch your wind, boy; those wide lakes are dangerous. Good luck to you!"

Dan gave his father a boost into the baggage car and the Transcontinental started west. He and Pepper went into the station to wait for the northbound limited.

The next morning they unloaded at Fort Frances. Away back in the rear, Dan could see his canoe emerging from the door of the baggage car. He shouldered his pack and went back there with his arms loaded to capacity. Turning over his receipt, he dumped everything into the canoe and called a station porter to help him carry it down to the lake. Fort Frances was a small place that did not detain him longer than it took to buy such heavy "starters" as meat and potatoes and onions. Dan's creed was that if a two-pound steak did not suffice till your rod or your rifle began furnishing "eats" you were no good in the woods.

They launched the canoe on Rainy Lake with Pepper barking his delight and Dan breathing in great breaths of this keen northern air. The time was late July, just after the black fly season. The train had got in so early that few people were about. It was a glorious day. A mild southwesterly breeze was ruffling the broad surface of Rainy Lake. Dan drove in his paddle and shoved the canoe for a point of

woods some three miles out. He hoped to make the entire traverse of ten miles to the north shore before the wind got too strong. It kept increasing as the sun rose higher and higher. He reached the point and stopped paddling to eye the traverse beyond.

"Not bad, Pep!" he commented. "Whitecaps already, but the wind's behind us."

It shoved them along famously. There was the put-put-put of motorboats beginning to move about. Dan sang as his canoe shot over the waves in long bounds. This was the life! Free, oh, so wonderfully free, away from all the pestering people and noise and hustle! He had grub for three weeks, and there would be trout and pike for the rods, and he was master of himself and his tent and transportation wherever he was! A tall lopped spruce marked the entrance of the Manitou River, and for it the youth headed.

Manitou proved to be a long backwater with numerous beaver dams crossing its swamps of black spruce. Those banks of muddy sticks were easy portaging. Selecting a place near the main spill, Dan carried the duffel up to the crest, hauled his canoe up the slimy slope by main strength and launched her again. He began to meet traffic on the river—breeds, Indians, herbmen; the latter were already bringing down their summer gatherings of medicinal roots and leaves, to trade in with the drug-firm buyer at Fort Frances. After responding to grunts from the Indians and cheery "Bo'jou',

m'sieu's" from the French-Canadians in wooden Peterboros, Dan decided to question one of these southbound herbmen. He could learn more from them than from any map about the conditions farther north. The individual now paddling toward him down the backwater looked as woodsy as a squirrel. He wore fringed buckskin, and his canoe was of birch bark. The roots in it were in homemade basket-oak containers, Dan noted, as the man drew alongside in answer to his hail.

"Shore ye kin reach Wabigoon this-away, young feller," said the woodsman. "The carry to it is marked by a tin can on a stake. Mind ye don't go up the backwater to the right! Beavers made it, an' she peters out into a brook right soon."

He was wiry, gray-haired, with extremely bright brown eyes that looked humorously on Dan from under his coonskin cap. Dan knew that his buckskin shirt was not mere front. This shirt was the best of all wear in the woods. The fringes were there to shed rain, not for ornament.

"Make it yourself?" Dan asked, with one hand on the gunwale of his canoe. "I see it's not Indian."

"Shore I made her. I make everything I need. Got a fine shack up beyond Wabigoon. Put her all up meself, an' split out the roof shakes with a froe. Whyfore ye goin' all naked thataway?" the woodsman asked in his turn.

Dan laughed. "Injun all face, you know!" he said. "You get so you don't mind the cold any more than your face does."

"Ye do look sorter Injun," commented the woodsman. "But they all wears ole clothes nowadays. Ye won't see none of the reel old-timers till ye gits up in the Saint Joseph country."

"That's where I'm going," said Dan.

"Sho! Quite a piece from here, young feller! But ye carry over from the big bend on Wabigoon—she's marked by a big-all white pine with jest the top branches left onto it—and then there's nothin' to it clear down to Lac Seul. *Then* what ye goin' to do?" he demanded. "She's mean, that lake."

"Ever been across it?" Dan asked.

"Naw. Ain't no yarbs up yonder. The fur goes out by Lake Savant to the Nipigon. Ye got the north wind behind ye that-away."

Dan reflected on these great natural conditions that dictated the choice of routes. The maps said nothing about them. He remembered Lake Savant as being one-third the distance between Lake Saint Joseph and Nipigon. Streams and portages connected them, but it was the wind that was the controlling factor. Lac Seul was one hundred and fifty miles long, but it lay east and west.

"Thanks," he said. "I'm trying it by the north shore of Lac Seul. One map says there's a carry to Saint Joseph; the other two say they're connected. I'd like to know which is right."

The woodsman could not help him there. "Allus the north wind up there!" he said. "You watch yoreself, and wait for a good day afore ye make that traverse!"

Dan camped that night forty miles in from Fort Frances. His tent was the "Forester," designed by the editor of one of the big outdoor magazines. Light and compact, weighing only three pounds in green paraffined muslin, it gave an astonishing amount of room and comfort when set up with three poles cut in the forest. Its sides sloped down from the ridgepole, which itself sloped back downwards from the shear, made of two front poles that spread wide its open front. The heat rays of the campfire were reflected downward upon the interior from both slopes and the back of the tent. So long as an ember remained alive, the tent was warm. Pepper had once paid it the compliment of curling up in it to sleep when he had the choice of three other tents around the same campfire. He was offering neither criticism nor flattery; he was simply selecting the warmest tent!

Dan grilled one-half of his steak and divided it between himself and Pepper. They had a mulligan of potatoes and onions and beef chunks, using up the heavy and perishable stuff first. He had no time to fish, just yet. Not till they were through with the Manitou would he feel free to relax.

They were still on it by next evening. Dams, rapids, false backwaters contrived by the beavers, led him astray more than once. The stream was getting narrower and more difficult as it neared its source. No tin can on a stake yet. . . . Dan worried that some ignorant camper had carried it off, not knowing that a blaze of any kind is sacred. He had met one

The rest stick

or two canoes of fishing sports that day. But the very next morning he came upon the blaze and shouldered the pack and canoe to take up the forest trail. Together the two burdens weighed a hundred pounds. It was a heavy load—staggering at first—but to make a double carry meant trebling the distance. Dan cut a rest-stick and adjusted the tump strap across his forehead, so as to relieve his shoulders for the canoe load. It was then that he thanked the Doctor for reminding him to take two paddles instead of one; the extra one not only allowed for breakage but was invaluable in portages. Lashing the paddles side by side, with just room for his head to go between, Dan let their broad blades press on his shoulders, which were protected by pairs of thick socks. The rest-stick was needed every hundred paces along that trail. Longer by two inches than the youth was tall, he put the upper end of the stick against the canoe bottom when he was ready to rest; its lower end he buried in the ground. Lowering the canoe till the tail touched the leaves, he stepped out from beneath it. To keep the canoe from crashing over Dan held fast to the rest-stick. It saved the heaviest labor of all—swinging the canoe up on one's shoulders again.

Dan rested for perhaps the twentieth time and wiped the sweat from his body. Pepper's tongue hung out. The day was hot, and the trail was not only rooty and stony by turns as it went up and down over the low swales, but it was also infested by nagging deer flies.

"Not half so bad for you as it is for me, old-timer!" he told the dog cheerily. "Next carry, darned if I don't make a dog travois for you! It's worth the time. You could tote one of these duffel bags easily."

Pepper wagged his tail but did not understand. It was time he did, Dan resolved. All Indian dogs carried their load. He wished this trail would end!

End it did, at last, with the long arm of Wabigoon stretching due north. The southwest wind still held, so Dan launched immediately. The time would come, all too soon, when the wind would be north and he would have to fight his way inch by inch. He rigged a primitive sail with the tent, and, more tired than he cared to admit, went scudding down Wabigoon. By sunset the big pine was reached and Dan called it a day. One hundred miles from Fort Frances!

Chapter II

ENTER, THE NORTH WIND

As the portage to Minnitaki was to occupy the whole day, Dan began it by fashioning a travois for Pepper. He cut two six-foot poles in the forest and some short stout sticks to make a burden frame. There would have to be two straps under Pepper's forelegs and a pad across his back to which the travois poles could be lashed. When you are going light it becomes a question of what material can be spared. Dan finally decided on two handkerchiefs for the straps and his dry bag for the pad. He sewed the bag to the two poles with

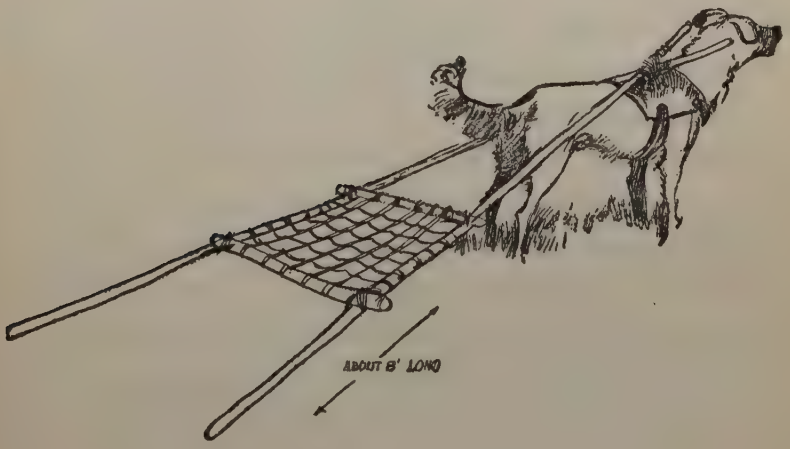
strong pickerel line. As Dan adjusted the harness, Pepper looked somewhat mystified, but wagged his tail in hopes for the best. The three cross-sticks were next lashed to the poles, making a strong platform. On it went the food-and-supplies duffel bag. Pepper promptly lay down.

"Get up!" commanded Dan sternly. "Hold still!"

Dan lashed the bag on by its straps; then he tied a thong to the dog's collar and led him a short distance along the trail.

"That's a good dog, Pep!" he cried encouragement. "*Hep!* Pull!"

Pepper caught on amazingly. He found that the travois and its load would follow him easily over the rocks and roots of the trail. After all, his share of the weight was only about fifteen pounds. And he was soon as proud as Punch over his new accomplishment.



Dan led Pepper back, turned him around, and himself shouldered the canoe and the light blanket-and-tent duffel bag. The long carry to Lake Minnitaki began. Up and down through the forest and over the Height of Land led the trail. They were in Hudson's Bay Company waters now. The great Company, with its fixed policy of trading no liquor to the Indians and keeping them all at peace, reigned supreme from here north to the Arctic Circle. Dan came to a straight, cleared fire lane in the spruces through which ran the railroad. Ten miles away to either side was a station, with its articles of civilization and its cabin folk of the frontier, but he had no desire for either. The trail abounded in game signs: dainty hoofprints of deer, the claw marks of black bear and lynx, timber-wolf tracks twice as large as Pepper's, and the long print of the snow-shoe hare. Twice Pepper had dashed after a large brown fellow, travois and all, before Dan's fierce "Come back here! Heel!" had taught him that game was not to be chased during working hours, and he followed along meekly.

Minnitaki, at last! Dan set the canoe down and realized that he badly needed rest. The worst part of the trip was over. A flat calm had set in, and a glorious sunset over the still mirror of the lake invited him to loaf. With the tent set up, he got out his tackle and started fishing among the lily pads for their supper. The short bait-casting rod sent out its lure to the song of a purring reel. Deftly Dan aimed for vari-

ous coves in the lily pads. The tireless pike of that lake responded with fierce smashes at the spinner and pork rind.

Furious battles ensued, Pepper barking madly, Dan snubbing his pike with the reel, giving him line when he got too strong, slowly tiring him out till he swam alongside and was headed into the landing net. When he had three of them, each a yard long, he called it a day.

They slept and loafed nearly all the next day. This was the life! Wild ducks in thousands rafted on the lake. They were already gathering for their winter flight to the south, the younger broods strengthening their wings by aimless wanderings. Dan shot a few with the rifle for fresh meat. Game seasons were for sportsmen; they were tacitly relaxed for all trappers, woodsmen, and voyageurs, who could be depended upon to take no more than their actual needs.

His aching muscles completely refreshed, Dan made a leisurely paddle of twenty-five miles on the third day. It brought him within sight of the railroad trestle that crossed the Lake to Graham's. That night he was awakened by the cold, sleepily pulled a second flap of the blanket over him and backed up closer to Pepper. He did not bother to poke up the fire. The unusual noise of a train rumbling across the trestle woke him again. A white-throat sparrow roused on his perch and sang his sad little refrain of the North: "Ah! ah! Poor, poor, poor Canada, Canada, Canada!" A swirl of cold air rushed into the tent. Dan rolled out of his blanket and

held up a wet finger. The north wind! It had come like a thief in the night. Gone was the brief summer of the Hudson Bay country. From now on it would be fight against head winds—and early rising.

"Over the river, Pepper!" he yelled. "We got to make the north shore before this wind gets up, and no foolin'!"

He broke camp in a hurry. The lake was quiet. The spruces all along its shores had a continuous brown line some eight feet up—the mark of the winter snows that killed all the young fronds buried in it. From October to May there would be a white blanket up to that mark. The only color that relieved the uniform brown was the white of thousands upon thousands of canoe birches that crowded the shore, seeking sunlight.

Dan drove his paddle swiftly. He had to cross Minnitaki to reach the station of Superior Junction, at that time the beginning of new construction on the Canadian National. The north wind piled up waves steadily as he crossed. He came scooting in through whitecaps to the point where the trestle marched out in log piers from the land.

A few log cabins and a trading post, with the pious name of God's Eternal Mercy Store, was all there was to Superior Junction. Dan wired his father, out at Medicine Knee, Wyoming, and then went to the store to lay in potatoes, sausages, hams and flitches of bacon, for he had no more portages to make now.

"How came the store's name, sir?" he asked the elderly Scotch Presbyterian who waited on him.

"Ye may well ask, young mon! 'Twere that terrible spring when the ice went out so bad that yon trestle was brokit in twain. A snowslide buried the rails in Zarn's valley. For weeks there was naught to eat but the food in this store. I asked no cash, then. A mon was hungry; be he breed or Injun or trapper, 'twas suffeecient. The dominie said that 'twas only God's eternal mercy that the ice did not take this store too. A gr-reat floe, that piled its cakes higher and higher, till the trestle went like matchsticks—it pr-resented me with yon boulder."

Dan followed his pointing finger to a great rock in the road that no team had been able to move. The street wound around it now. Flimsy were the stoutest constructions of man compared to the power of ice!

He was wind-bound all day on the point. The wide bay to the north would be smothered with whitecaps till sunset. After that he could get along, hugging the north shore. It was a dreary wait. Dan avoided the bunkhouse and quarters of the rough construction men using the Junction as a base. He kept to his camp, and there an old-clothes Cree hunted him up.

"Where you go, boy?" he asked with Indian directness, after a period of squatting and examining minutely Dan's tent and everything in it.

"Lac Seul," said Dan. "Any of your people living there?"

"No good!" said the Indian violently. "Lac Seul heap wind! You makum portage to Sturgeon. Little carry—eight miles."

He pointed up the bay to a lopped tree. It was good advice, but Dan had had enough of carrying.

"I'll make it," he said. "Where your people now? Me friends with Knisteneaux."

The old fellow's eyes lighted up at this mention of the true name of the Crees. "All gone," he said. "Fur brigade go Fort Albany this tam of year. Five hunder' mile. Back in wild-rice moon."

That meant September. Dan was relieved. He had till then to reach Saint Joseph. He would come in for some wild-rice ceremonies, he hoped. Rice was the staple cereal up there. The forest was subarctic, its few oaks and such deciduous trees strays from farther south. The Indians did not depend much upon acorn flour, though they used quantities of lily roots for tubers.

"Wigwams?" Dan inquired. He had seen nothing but tent poles and rusty pieces of sheet iron at the various Indian campsites that he had passed so far.

"Plenty wigwam. Knisteneaux build them. Warmer than tent . . . but not here." The old brave grunted disdainfully around the settlement. Dan understood. He would have to wait till he went farther north to find the primitive, unspoiled Swamp Crees.

Pepper was very proud of his new accomplishment

He crossed the bay that evening, paddled twenty miles during the quiet night, shot the rapids of the Sturgeon, and had reached Lac Seul by dawn. It was an ungodly sheet of water, a hundred and fifty miles long and twenty miles wide in most places. The weather was growing worse. A summer northeaster was coming, one of those great storms which sweep down over the whole north country, at least once, in August, and last for a week. He would not mind the wet and cold, for his body was by now face-tanned. The spray, as it shot over the canoe's bow, felt good and bracing on his skin. But he did mind being wind-bound. Ten days of his time had already gone. It was early in August, what date he did not know precisely, but there were a hundred and thirty miles yet to go to reach Factory Saint Joseph. Dan had no idea what kind of river it was that ran into Lac Seul at its upper end. Would he have to pole it, and carry around innumerable rapids, for the whole of its thirty miles up to the portage across to Saint Joseph? Or would it be all choked with windthrown trees, so that he would have to abandon the canoe and pack in? No man knew these things. This was unmapped country save for its general details. The nearest human habitation was now forty miles away through the timber.

"Pep, it looks mean!" Dan stepped out of the tent that morning and glanced up at the thickening sky overhead. "We've got to hug the shore close and move right along, I'm telling you!"

Pep's ears and tail drooped. This was a new kind of lake to him; it seemed more like an ocean! The timber was different, too; birches were few and far between, now, the evergreens less generous, mostly black spruce that grew ragged and tall, seemingly having had a hard fight to keep alive. Pepper had bayed at the Northern Lights the night before. Some subtle influence in their ghostly flashes had touched the Husky-dog strain in him.

The canoe fought along past shores that were rockbound and beetling. The wind was in their teeth, now, instead of driving along famously at their backs. Dan strained at the paddle, passing point and cove at a mere walking pace. Time and again he ran ashore for a rest. There was no rest out there! The end of a whole day's toil showed hardly fifteen miles from the bold headland which marked the ingress of the Sturgeon.

The next day was worse. The rain came down in sheets. A smother of whitecaps raced down Lac Seul. Out there in the offing they were small ocean waves, and even along shore it was spotty and tempestuous going. A devil of driving urged Dan on. For the first time in this trip, he felt the push of hurry. Time—days, hours—had been nothing, so far, but this delay was losing him precious time at Factory Saint Joseph.

Doggedly Dan drove the canoe along the shore, running in to dump the shipped water out of her at every sheltered cove.

Even paddling close to land it was all he could do to work the canoe onward. Nightfall found him warming up in the tent, dog tired.

About the middle of the next morning the weather put a final stop to all further progress. Rounding a stubborn point, which jutted out in enormous Laurentian bastions of rock, Dan saw a wide gulf opened out before him to the northeast. There was no crossing that bay!

"We camp, Pep!" Dan growled, paddling the canoe around. "We'll have to den up and take it easy until this is over."

He ran in under the lee of the point and found a site that would do. Here, under a big spruce, he set up the tent, guyed out its verandah to make a cooking space sheltered from the rain, and built a brush windbreak on both sides. Here they stayed. The storm was one of those big processes of nature which takes no account of insignificant humans and their wants. It was due to last a week. If some puny man succumbed in it, that was his affair.

Day after day Dan chafed in camp. He was comfortable and cosy, but he was not getting anywhere, and time was flying. He spent two days in mending frayed gear, in repacking the duffel, in playing with Pepper. But time hung heavy on his hands. He found that early in the mornings there was a short lull before the daylight came. On the third morning, desperate, he tried creeping around the gulf shore. Its lee shore was dangerous with rocks, but after paddling a short

distance into the bay, where the swells from the main lake did not sweep in, he found that the canoe could be driven across it into the teeth of the choppy seas.

That was a wild ride! Humming a little tune, Dan sat in the stern, watching each comber, throwing up the canoe-bottom toward it for each and every one of them. He rode the waves like a huntsman, the canoe shooting up bodily, to crash down into the next hollow. It was playing with death. But, in time, the opposite shore loomed up near and he was across the bay and under the shelter of its trees.

"Made *that,* anyhow, Pep-dog!" he cried to the anxious Pepper. "Now for the main lake!"

Along the north shore of the headland the canoe crept, the waves more ferocious with every sweep of the paddle. Out there beyond the point, a bold promontory of smooth and solid rock, the whole of Lac Seul was sweeping by in a smother of foam. The moment the canoe poked her nose beyond that rock shelter, big waves met her and smashed her with brutal blows. Dan sang, shouted, called up fresh reserves of strength, and drove her into it. Pepper whined and ducked his head as spray flew over the bows. The point fell away rapidly to a little cove, and for this Dan headed with all his strength. Being blown out to sea was what he feared now! The possibility of it smote upon him with a fearful dread as he felt the force of that wind and wave.

The struggle grew desperate. Inch by inch he drove the

canoe in, holding every yard gained by main strength, his teeth set and trickles of spray running down his cold cheeks.

A final punch of the paddle—a grab at a bare white tree trunk that had fallen down the rock slope into the water; one of its naked branch stubs was in his grasp—then he ran the canoe ashore and leaped out, to haul her out of reach of the pounding waves which licked along the rock.

"That will be about all for us, Pepper!" Dan said grimly. Pepper shook himself vigorously, then leaped to paw at Dan with both paws. He whirled and capered on the solid land in an ecstasy of joy. Intelligent dog! He had understood more than Dan had realized the peril they had just come through.

Dan looked out over the whitecapped expanse of Lac Seul. "This is as far as we can go along this shore, anyhow. Across there is the traverse, twenty miles of it—fat chance!"

There was no horizon out there. A gray mist hung over the waters. Six miles to the northwest, two rocky islets, covered with wind-tossed spruces, loomed up distantly. Beyond that was, to all intents and purposes, the ocean itself. Only on clear days could the tiny spruce spires of the northwest bank of Lac Seul be seen. The crossing to the islands could be made in mild weather, and it saved about eighty miles of paddling around the shores of the north end of the lake. It was the direct route to the Lake Saint Joseph trail—but not for him, now!

Dan went into camp and stayed there two days.

Chapter III

THE FATEFUL TRAVERSE

"Hi! Pep! Here, you fool dog! Come here, doggone it!" Dan made the forest ring with his shouts. The lake showed signs of a lull and his canoe was nearly loaded. Out in the deep brush a series of funny squeaks that were not hound bays nor yet shepherd barks told him that Pepper was hot after something—a snowshoe hare, most likely.

It was exasperating! Goad a man long enough, and it is his feelings, not his reason, that make him act. This storm had lasted eight days, during five of which Dan had been absolutely wind-bound. He was late already for Osnaburgh House; one delay added to another had cut down the time much below what he and his father had allotted for making collections in the Cree villages near the Factory. He must push on, if only to ease his mind. The storm was breaking; there was no doubt of it. The light in the clouds was much brighter. A pale sun could be seen swimming up there, at in-

tervals. The wind was dropping, too; the trees around camp told him that. No longer did they bend and sway ceaselessly. Only Pepper was lacking to make a start.

Dan went on packing the canoe, stopping now and then to shout for his dog. He was stripped to the waist. The rain had stopped and his bathing trunks would be enough clothing—a swim was probable, even yet. He finished lashing in his packs, rifle, and ax. Then he glanced out over the lake again and belted on his hunting knife.

That group of spruce-clad islets loomed up in the haze six miles away, his last land before making the big traverse. It would be that much gained, anyway, to reach them. A stern and dangerous crossing of Lac Seul was ahead. But he had reached the point where cautious reason had to take a back seat; the urge to push on, after eight weary days of waiting, goaded him to trust in his skill to survive. The wind would be at his back. If he could ride the canoe steadily, those six miles over to the clump of islands would go like a flash. It did look, too, as if this were the last day of the storm.

He turned impatiently to look for Pepper again. The dog stood looking at him from the edge of the timber. His instinct told him that this was no weather to venture out on the lake. His expression showed it.

"Come here, Pep, you old snoozer! Come on—that's a good dog!" coaxed Dan, creeping toward him. Pepper whined and backed away into the timber. Dan made a short,

angry rush, that became outspoken as he tripped over a prone balsam and stretched his length on the rocky beach. Pepper whimpered with terror as he circled through the bush. Never had his beloved young master acted like this!

"All right—darn you!" said Dan, getting up and shrugging his shoulders, "I'll fix you! You stay behind, then!"

He made a feint of getting into the canoe and shoving her off. A disconsolate howl from the forest greeted this maneuver. Dan looked over his shoulder, to see Pepper squatting at the edge of the timber. He was crying; there were real tears running down his face. He was a mongrel, part hound, part wolf dog of the North, but he was as smart as lightning and Dan loved him.

Dan pushed off a short distance from shore and held the canoe with the paddle against the wind. It came in back-puffs and cat's-paws, even in here.

That was too much for Pepper! Yelping piteously he came down to the shore and begged to be taken off. Better to risk the angry seas than to be left here at the mercy of every wolf pack in the forest!

Dan relented and pushed the canoe ashore. There was a scuffle, for at the last moment Pepper objected and had to be hauled aboard by his collar, bracing with all four feet against the gunwale. Dan shoved off quickly and made Pepper lie down amidships. By the time he had grasped his paddle and knelt against the rear thwart the wind already had him.

Once clear of the lee of the tall forest, full realization of the danger of this traverse burst upon him. The waves, as seen from shore, appeared to be low gray knife-edges. Out here they were huge, boiling whitecaps that thundered past the gunwales and slopped over with every wash. Dan stopped paddling to tie hastily a strong cord to the paddle and the other end of it to the thwart. If he should be pitched overboard, that cord would be all that would keep the canoe from drifting away from him like a dry leaf. Then he turned the canoe aslant the waves as much as he dared. She was drifting out to sea so fast that the hardest kind of paddling would only just give him northing enough to make the islands. Lac Seul, at this point, was twenty miles wide. Dan could not see the faintest glimpse of the other shore; even the islands barely stood out of the mist, faint and gray, across a waste of water.

The canoe wallowed and tumbled through the chop. Dan warily watched the combers as they came roaring up on him, and tilted the bottom of the canoe each time to keep them from breaking over the gunwale. Now he wished he was back on shore again! But that refuge was already half a mile away. It did not seem possible, either, to reach the islands. Once blown past them, he would be out in the middle of nowhere with huge seas all around him.

Pepper howled with fright. He kept raising himself on his forelegs in spite of Dan's stern orders to keep down. He

looked longingly at the fast receding shore. Once he almost decided to leap from the canoe and trust to swimming.

"Here! This won't do! I've got to put back!" Dan brought the canoe about with a powerful sweep of the paddle. "Pep was right—I'm a fool!"

For a few moments the canoe rolled wildly, being utterly at the mercy of the waves while Dan was jumping forward to kneel in front of the bow thwart. By no strength now could he keep her head to the wind from the stern position. A big comber met him. The canoe's bow cut through it like a knife. Gallons of water cascaded over the bow curve into the canoe. Dan whipped out his knife and cut loose a pack; then flung it into the stern so as to make her less down by the head.

She rode more buoyantly now. But the wind had a tendency to seize the whole bow like a sail and whip it away from the course with a wicked slew that nearly unseated him. Dan had to paddle furiously to get her back again. Progress towards shore seemed a matter of inches, each inch to be fought for and held unrelentingly, by main strength. Even enduring strength could not stand this long! Inwardly Dan began to pray for help, to reach into his reserves of strength and courage. How near—and yet how infinitely far away and unattainable—was that welcome wall of high forest! Hitherto he had not been particularly religious. God, to him, was Nature. But he was worshipping a deaf, dumb and stone-blind god. Nature cares nothing at all for man and his woes. When

she smiles, man may bask in her genial moods; when she is angry, he had best keep under cover—she cares not a whit what he does!

Dan's hope for shore had now become an ardent longing. This battle was against altogether too overwhelming odds! These waves would conquer him. He hadn't gained an inch that he could see. His strength was going—but he could die fighting!

Again and again the force of the wind seized furiously on his canoe bow and whipped it broadside-to. He had to shove down the gunwale by main strength to keep the canoe from being capsized. Then a triple wave dashed at him. The canoe bow rose high in the air, smote down into the hollow, sent showers of spray out in twenty-foot spurts on each side. It rose again, poised sickeningly—and then the wind struck the bow like a thunderclap and it was whirled madly around. Dan felt all his balance going. He was falling over the side, grabbing blindly at the water. He snatched desperately at the paddle shaft and hung on grimly. The cold waters were closing over him. There was a terrific drag, which almost wrenched the paddle out of his grip—and then the cord snapped and left the paddle alone in his hand!

Dan came up, sputtering, to see the canoe flying away like a leaf. Pepper was about to jump overboard, his paws on the gunwale.

"Heavenly Father," Dan prayed, "Let me—catch—that

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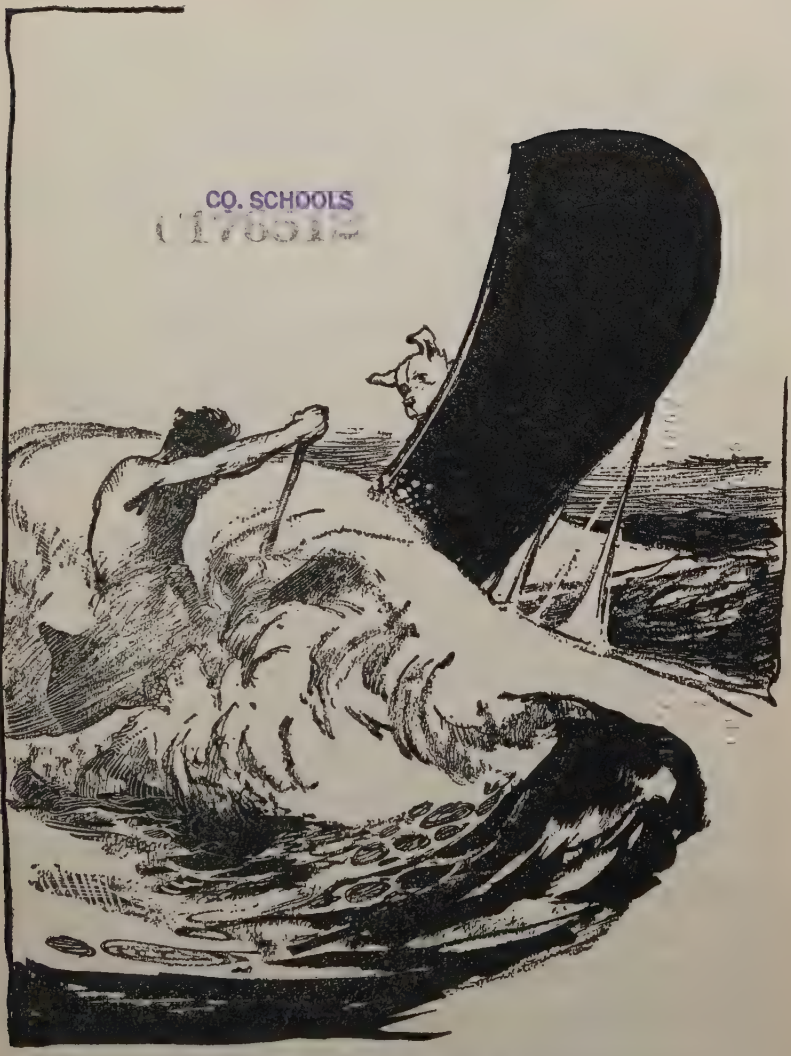


The canoe bow rose high in the air

canoe! He raced after it in his swiftest crawl stroke. As well catch the wind! It swept from wave-top to wave-top, hurtling through the air, blown like a feather over the waves. Pepper had already abandoned the canoe and was swimming toward him with splashing strokes. A frightened panic was in his eyes as he swam up to Dan.

"Come on, old fellow! There's no time to lose now!" Dan spluttered as he faced about. No use trying for the canoe any more. It was lost—and everything in it—somewhere out on the vast wastes of Lac Seul. Dan had to swim for bare life now!

He did not permit himself to look at the distant shore. He knew that the water had no current; it was only the wind that agitated it. Swimming low where he was out of the wind's drag, he had but to endure, to keep on swimming, to keep from being suffocated by the whitecaps. Sooner or later he would reach land. Pepper swam with him. He was afraid to leave Dan, and Dan in turn was reassured by his presence. Dan husbanded his strength, studying the break of the waves, breathing with a system that gave him air in the hollows and let the combers ride clear over him as they would.

After a long time he raised himself with a breast stroke and looked over the waves. The shore was appreciably nearer —but oh, how far, far away to his now feeble strokes! His legs felt like lead. They seemed almost numb. He *must* rest!

Pepper, who had forged ahead, came drifting back to him. The terror of death was in his eyes. He tried clumsily to paw up on Dan. The boy pushed him off, but the dog came on again. Dan was at the end of his strength, for the time, and desperate for a respite, *any* respite. The paddle!

He shoved the paddle in front of him and clutched Pepper by his collar. "Here, old fellow, get . . . get your head over this!" he said, lifting the dog's muzzle gently and guiding it over the paddle blade. As Dan held him, he lay with his muzzle bearing down on the blade, his legs stiff and straight, wavering down through the water. Dan floated on his back, holding the dog's head on the paddle, kicking feebly forward and trying to get breath between the whitecaps.

Five minutes passed. Then a protesting convulsion ran through his legs. They *must* have rest; they ached for just a few minutes of surcease from this eternal thrust!

"My turn—that paddle, now, Pep!" Dan gasped. He slid the paddle from under Pepper's jowl. He threw himself on his back with the shaft under his neck and took a full breath. Bliss! There was buoyancy enough in the paddle, with just an occasional kick, to hold him up. Dan felt that he could rest forever. Pepper started to swim on, but came back, whining questioningly. Dan had another idea now. He reached down and whipped the pucker string from his bathing trunks, caught their tops under his belt, and then reached out and tied the string to Pepper's collar.

"There! Swim, Pep! *Hep!*" Dan said encouragingly.

He held the other end of the string as Pepper forged ahead. That went far easier! A subtle feeling of companionship in their fight for life came thrilling back to him through that string. Dan kicked out valiantly, aiding the dog's pull with his thrust.

For a time they got on famously, then Pepper came back, panting and gasping. His eyes said that he needed the paddle badly. Dan surrendered it. Tying the string to his belt, he set out ahead, towing. The rest had given him new life, so that his arms struck out with swing and force.

But the dead weight behind him killed his heart. He looked back, to where Pepper's head nosed at him over the paddle blade. The dog was swimming with slow strokes of his paws, but the confounded paddle kept canting off, and Pepper's efforts to keep his head on its blade were exhausting them both. Hastily Dan untied the string again, turned over on his back and floated, utterly done in. He felt his legs sinking, slowly, slowly. He wanted to kick with them, but could not. Well, *let* them sink! This was the end! Slowly he dropped below the waves, a yearning toe reaching, reaching for the bottom that would never come. . . . It touched a slimy rock, far below, and Dan rebounded with bursting lungs and a bewildered struggle for life, breath, air. He burst through the surface. A disconsolate howl greeted his ears. Pepper had thought that he was alone on the waters.

The misery and tragedy of it all smote Dan like a whiplash. Here were two beings in the grip of death . . . and on him alone depended two lives. He reached for the paddle, to get time to think, to rest—oh, how he ached for just a few minutes of rest! Pepper swam ahead. The change had revitalized him for a moment. Dan crooked his legs over the paddle shaft, held his breath and hung to the string. At least that awful sinking of his weary legs was prevented by the buoyancy of the paddle!

Then Pepper came back. He was through. He had lost command of himself and wanted but one thing, to live, no matter how. His paws thrashed wildly, scratching Dan's body as he tried to climb up on him. Dan grasped his muzzle and ducked him fiercely. This senseless struggle would never do! He got the dog over one arm and Pepper quieted down as he felt himself being supported. Then his legs went stiff and he became a dead weight. Dan found that by keeping one arm going and inflating his chest all he could, they would both keep just afloat.

But it could not last. That arm grew leaden. By no force of will could he keep it going.

"Good-by, old fellow—save yourself, if you can!" His tired arm had ceased to move. Pepper leaped forward as the waters closed over him. Dan let him go this time. Pepper's back cleaved the waves toward shore. It was surprisingly near now; not over sixty yards. The waves in here were com-

paratively quiet. But it might as well be sixty miles, for him, thought the boy as he drifted, utterly spent. He saw Pepper reach the shore at last, crawl out on a rock and fall over, panting. He had used up the last ounce of his strength in getting to land.

For a long time nothing happened. Dan lay with the paddle under his knees, floating on his back, keeping up with an occasional spasmodic stroke as a wave slopped over into his nostrils and whipped him into action. He felt numb and drowsy all over. The shore was not a bit nearer, a little farther off, if anything. He was making no progress.

Then a little wave finished him. It rolled right over him, unresisting, and choked down into his windpipe. Coughing and gasping, the boy abandoned the paddle and broke into a last desperate spurt of swimming. He must reach land, this time—he *must!* Nearer and nearer the big rocks of the shore came. He panted and rasped hoarsely as his eyes fixed themselves, now on Pepper, now on the great, gaunt, white trunks of pine and balsam which had fallen out of the forest wall.

Then a cramp seized him and locked his muscles fast. It was a hideous fate—to drown within twenty yards of shore! He fought against it with all his soul, but relentlessly his body was going under.

"Pepper! Pepper!" he screamed. "Here, Pep!"

The dog staggered to his feet and plunged in. Dan struggled with the one arm that was left him. He was fighting for

the brief minute of time that it took the dog to swim out. Then he grappled the string still dangling from Pepper's collar, drew a deep breath, and hung on.

It seemed an eternity while Pepper towed him doggedly toward shore. Then a stronger tug told him that Pepper's paws had touched bottom. A moment later Dan's own knees struck. Floundering the few yards left, he crawled out on the granite and sprawled there, totally exhausted.

Chapter IV

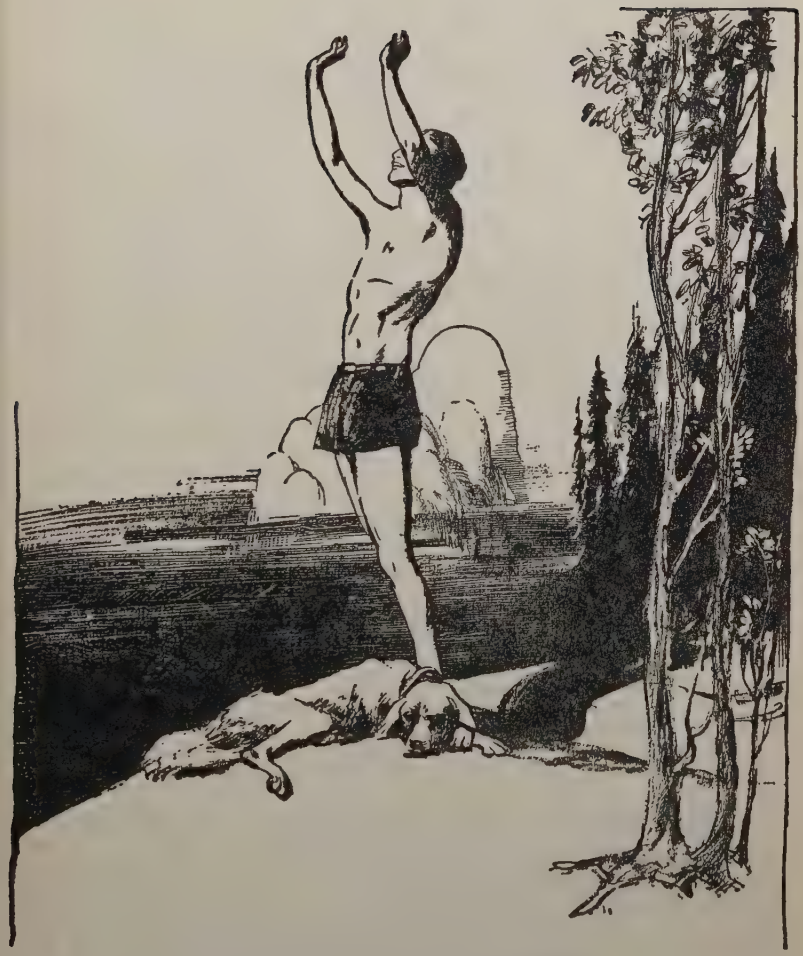
NATURE'S CHALLENGE

It was a full hour before Dan moved again. Then he grabbed Pepper, who lay beside him, and hugged him. The dog whined like a crooning mother; but Dan had no words—only tears.

"We're alive, old-timer, thanks to you!" he said at length. "Pep-dog, just what we're going to do about it all is a little too much for me." Dan grinned feebly. He lay back again, to think. The sun had come out. The storm was over, but the wind was still high. The lake would be comparatively quiet in a few hours more. If only he had waited!

"Well, Pep, the canoe and everything in it is gone—for good. We could never find it again in a thousand years. It's an eighty-mile hike around the lake to where she would strike—if there's anything left. Capsized, most likely. The wind would blow her clear out of water!

"And it's fifty miles back to the railroad and the nearest settlement, too, Pepper." Dan smiled, shaking his head at



"A needy one stands before Thee."

the dog. "That's rather strong stuff for my bare feet to try! I want to say, right now, that Robinson Crusoe didn't know a thing about shipwreck! Not a doggone thing, Pepper!"

The dog wagged his tail, gently. He was glad to see his young master taking an interest in life again. Also he was hungry.

"We've got a pair of bathing trunks and its string—that's important! Also my hunting knife—more important!" Dan said merrily to his dog. "Also your collar, my belt, and a useless paddle, to take a complete stock of our wealth."

He turned to shake his fist at Mother Nature, as represented by the surrounding forest. For the first time he doubted her. He had always loved her, devotedly, admiringly. Now he began to realize that she cared nothing at all for him.

"I guess we'll begin this new life with a prayer, Pepper," Dan said, soberly, rising to his feet. He faced the east and stretched forth his arms. His voice rose in the quavering chant of the Omaha:

"*Wahkondah, dhe du; wapadin ah ton ke!*" he sang. "Father, a needy one stands before Thee; I that sing am he!"

Dan turned from his prayer and looked about him. Mother Nature was already challenging him. Her weapons would be hunger, cold, insects. She had food in plenty; warmth and covering; but they must be won from her with wits and courage. She gave nothing to the ignorant and the craven.

Dan threw back his head and accepted the challenge.

"Here we stay and make a home for ourselves, Pepper!"

Pepper made an excellent confidant. He never argued back, nor wanted to do something else. He only wagged his tail approvingly. A human companion would have insisted that the thing to do was to hike back across the mountains to the railroad, trusting not to die of hunger on the way; or he would have argued Dan into trying to skirt the lake, in the hope of finding what was left of the canoe and duffel on the other shore. Both of these courses, Dan knew, would be futile. He was glad he did not have to convince anyone of that!

Nature's best weapon, hunger, was already gnawing at them both. Dan resolutely turned his back on it. There were more important things than that, the first of which was to make a fire. With the going down of the sun, the gnats would make life unbearable. It would be too late then to make a fire by friction. The wood for it must be bone dry and warm, not damp and clammy with dew. He could not tell how long it would take before getting the first blaze; if he had luck, an hour would suffice. But while the sun shone was the time to do it. Dan first carefully flattened out the pucker string of his bathing trunks and set it in the sun, where it would dry out enough to grip his firestick shaft well, and not run moisture down the stick. Then he broke off a short, round branch from a dead balsam that lay weathering on the beach, cut a shoulder and a pinion on its upper end and roughly

pointed the lower. Setting this wooden drill in the sun, he went into the forest, searching for a pine knot in the duff. On this he whittled a comb that could be gripped with his teeth. He then dug a shallow socket for the drill shoulder in its under face. For a fire-board he split a second length of balsam, cut a few notches in its edge, and then went hunting for cedar-bark tinder. Dan had made fire before in the forest, with no string at all to start with, and no knife. That time he had cut loose the bark of a young mockernut hickory sapling with his teeth, split it into thin strips with his nails, and wove it into a braided cord that was strong and supple. This worked with a bow-drill; but he could not trust the tape-string of his bathing trunks to make a bow-cord without breaking.

This time Dan used the fire-making method of the Ojibways. The drill cord was operated by both hands and the drill socket held in the teeth. He tied a short grip-stick to each end of his cord, put his knee on the fire-board, and stooped over it with the socket in his teeth. Wrapping the string once around the drill-stick, he put its point in a little dent up at the head of the *V* of one of the notches. Its pinion revolved in the socket. Then, as he drew the string back and forth in long strokes, the drill began to whirl. As the point sank in, he increased the pressure on the socket by bearing down with his head. Presently smoke came from the notch in white clouds. A fine dust of charred black wood accumulated in it. Dan redoubled his pressure and sawed faster and faster with the

string. When the smoke came thick and yellow, he snatched away the drill and fanned vigorously with his hand at the fuming dust pile. A tiny rill of smoke came up from it, unceasingly. Dan smiled. He knew that a live coal now lay buried there. Presently it grew large and glowing red, as big as a cigarette tip.

That was what he was waiting for. Picking up the chip of bark under the notch in the fire-stick, he clapped his wad of crumpled cedar bark over it and began to blow. More and more smoke arose, and then it burst into flame. He set it down on the site chosen for the fire and fed it yellow birch curls. Flames arose and licked through the small twigs. The yellow, oily flame of the birch blazed up, while Pepper looked on approvingly. And then Dan did the oldest and most natural thing known to mankind; he warmed his hands over his fire.

"I thank Thee, Wahkondah," he muttered, humbly.

His chilled hands responded to the grateful warmth. By the time it was a big husky blaze, Dan looked about him for the next thing to start work on. This was obviously shelter. The nights here would be freezing cold; hunger could wait. Something warm and quickly put up with his bare hands was what was wanted. His campsite was a rocky little cape that jutted out from the timber. Its foreground was of solid rock, shelving abruptly into the lake, with a sparse growth back of it of young spruce and service-berry bushes. Behind these rose the slopes of the timber. Dan chose for his hut a little

hollow in the slope that had been gouged out by the rains. It had a small gray pine on one horn of the hollow and a crooked quaking aspen on the other.

The form of shelter that would give the most heat for the least roof surface would be two triangular walls, running each way from a ridge pole, which itself slants down to the ground behind a pair of shears supporting it—practically a copy of his Forester tent. Dan knew from having done it before that in half an hour he could put up such a shelter with his hands alone. It did not take five minutes to drag three dead balsam poles to the site and set them up as a tripod. The front shears rested in each other's branches and the ridge pole slanted down back from them to the rear of the little hollow. Then four poles were laid on each side down from the ridge pole, to form walls agreeing with the slope of the shear poles. On these Dan laid crosswise a quantity of short branches picked up in the forest, so as to form a network of twigs to support the roof of leaves and pine-needle duff. These went on next, handfuls and armfuls of them, until the whole hut was roofed with a thick bank of duff, needles, leaves, and twigs on each wall. Out in front he built a new fire and made it high and strong, with a great slab of rock propped up for a backstop. Inside the hut he piled all the dry leaves and needles from far and wide. The sun shone down into the triangular mouth of his shelter. The fire heat struck on its inner walls and was reflected down on the bed of leaves.

Pepper curled up in there and went to sleep. His coat was still wet and cold.

Dan glanced at the sun. It was about two o'clock and there was much yet to do. He was raging hungry. The meek and lowly bullfrog would be his first source of food. By four o'clock the lake pike would be out feeding and he had all his fishing tackle yet to make.

Back of the cape was a large cove, with beds of lily pads, and back of that would be a swamp, with the all-important fishline willows growing in it. Stifling his hunger, Dan set out, leaving the fire well logged and banked with big chips of old bark. Pepper jumped up to join him, but Dan stopped and turned back.

"By jerry, a fellow doesn't set out into the woods without the best weapons he can find—not if he's wise!" he exclaimed to himself. "You never can tell what chances might come up."

He selected a light, straight shaft of spruce and lashed his knife to the end of it, with the bathing-trunks string, to make a spear. Then he set forth again for the swamp. As he walked silently through the timber down an old deer trail, with his hand on Pepper's collar to keep him quiet, the chance of chances suddenly presented itself. A snowshoe hare suddenly hopped out and "froze" on the trail.

Dan stood eyeing him and raising the spear cautiously. The fires of hunger were raging in him. He could eat that hare raw! He cast his spear suddenly, but, quick as the mo-

tion was, the hare was far quicker. A wild leap had landed him ten feet into the woods while the spear was still in the air. Pepper dashed after him with a volley of futile barks. Dan retrieved his spear ruefully.

"Nothing but the quickness of a bow and arrow will do for them!" he cried. "Gosh! What a peach of a shot! I just *couldn't* have missed him with a bow!"

He had better luck at the swamp. It was full of green-head frogs. He had but to stand motionless and look with all his eyes, then approach carefully with the spear knife and make a quick thrust. He came back to camp with a dozen frogs and a big bundle of willow shoots.

Pepper was already there. Tired out from chasing the hare, he watched with cocked head as Dan cut off the frogs' legs and set them to broil in a long row on a birch sliver. Dan started making twine while they were cooking. The inner bark of the northern willow is tough and stringy, and it peels in lengths as long as the shoot. Knotting them together, Dan soon had several lengths of fiber over twenty feet long. He then whittled a twine-twister, a sort of flat vane with a hole near one end, through which a short handle stuck. Tying the other ends of the fibers to a bush, he whirled the twister about until the rope so made began to kink. It was then ready to double back on itself. When the ends were released, it twisted itself together to make a strong piece of twine about ten feet long.

The frogs' legs were now done, so he divided them with Pepper. They were food, not nearly enough of it, but they took the raw edge off his hunger. Of the leg bones Dan now whittled a couple of sharp hook points and cut barbs in them. Taking a frog's head and body, he thrust through it a stout fork, like a small anchor, with the sharp bone point lashed to the prongs by the tough frog skin stripped from the legs. Buried in the raw, red base of the bait, it would hold any pike that tried to gorge his frog.

"Come on, Pep! Now for some real food!" Dan started off for the cove again. The sun was setting when he stepped out on a great rock which jutted out into the lily pads. He cut a long slender moosewood pole and tied the twine and bait to it. The green depths of the water glowed with burnished fire shining over the vast mirror of the lake. The wind had gone down, and all nature was at peace.

Near his rock was a patch of lily pads. They shone red and black on the golden surface of the water. Out to the patch Dan cast his bait. It landed deftly on a pad and then, drawing the bait with a series of jerks, he made it swim and ripple through the water.

At perhaps the sixth cast there was a terrific surge, bait and all disappearing in a showering mass of foam. The pole doubled and its line slitted through the water. Something big and fast had hold there! Pepper barked madly. Dan whooped with delight as a great northern pike a yard long shot out of

the water, shaking his head wildly. The boy snubbed him sharply, taking up the slack; then held him taut as the pike bored down into the depths. It would not do to let him reach bottom, where he could snag the line around a root, or cut it on a rock edge! Dan put full strain on his slender pole, bending it almost double. This was a big fellow! He could hardly budge him!

Again the pike shot to the surface—this time to make a mere swirl and then head full speed for the lily pads. Dan snubbed him off with all his strength. He could not trust that homemade line among those long tough stems! He turned the pike again, at the last moment. It went out to sea, where it turned at the end of the line and tugged like a bulldog. The rod could help Dan but little, now; it all depended upon the honesty that he had put into the making of that line.

The tugs ceased. There was a hideous slackness. Had he lost him? Had the bone hook pulled out? Dan raised the rod, scarce daring to hope. But the pike was still on, having darted in; and now he was swimming in a big circle at the end of the line. Dan laughed grimly. That was what he wanted. Let the big fish tire himself out! A brief struggle at the end of the turn, and he came back again. This time he was nearer in and bearing down hard with his fins against the pressure that Dan was putting on the line to get his head out of water.

There were no more leaps left in him, now. More and more slowly he swam. Once his yellow belly showed as he rolled

over in exhaustion. Higher and higher rose the rod. Dan waded cautiously out into the shallow water that covered the shelf of the rock. The great green fish swam by him, once, twice—each time nearer in. Then it rolled over once more, and, seizing his chance, Dan stooped quickly and sank his fingers into his gills.

Pandemonium broke loose on that rock. Once out of water, the pike thrashed and snapped wildly. Pepper yelped as its sawteeth slashed his leg.

"Get him! Get him!" gasped Dan. "Dinner! Fishhooks! Everything!" he knelt on him fiercely as the pike squirmed and slashed under his knees. Then the ready knife drove down through his head and Dan waited for the fish to become quiet. Hugging his precious prize tight, he leaped ashore with whoops of triumph.

Safe on land, he and Pepper stood eyeing the pike hungrily as it still thrashed about freely. "Gee, I'm hungry enough to eat him alive, Pep, but we've just got to have something to go with it for a filler. Yellow water-lily roots for ours."

He took off his bathing trunks and lashed the pike securely, high up on a slender sapling. Then, plunging in, Dan swam over to where the thick stalks and round yellow flowers of the spatterdock lily grew thickly in the cove amid their flotilla of coarse leaves. Diving in five feet of water, his hands grasped the thick tuberous root. With a powerful heave of his shoulders, he rose to the surface with a section of root two feet long.

"There! That will answer for spuds!" he grunted, satisfied.

Washing the root off as he swam leisurely to shore, Dan rejoined Pep, who had not stopped eyeing the pike. They took it down and returned to camp. The first thing done was to break the lily root into sections and bury these in the ashes for roasting. Dan knew that the Indians usually boiled them with their meats, but they were also good roasted. Then he built up the fire and started searching for a dead, hard maple club along shore, something clean and flat, and weathered from long bleaching on the beach. It did not take long to find a suitable club, and this he drove in close enough to the fire to get scorching hot.

Meanwhile Dan carefully sheared off the whole of one side of the pike. It made a beautiful steak, the fresh white meat clinging to the skin in a long slab. By this time the maple club was blackened with the heat. Dan hung the steak the length of it, driving small hardwood pins into cracks made by his knife point to support it. He and Pepper watched hungrily as the pike's flesh turned white and flaky in the heat, and then began to brown and glaze. Fat juices trickled down through the cracks in the meat. In twenty minutes it was done. Raking out the smoking-hot lily roots from under the ashes, he and Pepper fell on the meal with loud, hungry cries.

With a pound of meat under his belt, Dan felt better. He next built a spruce smudge, for it was twilight and the

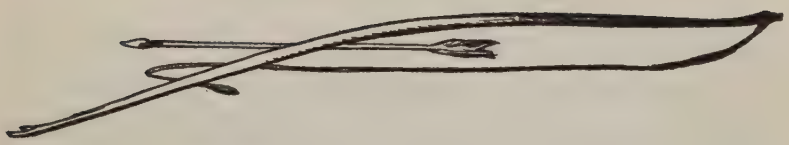
punkies were out. The rest of the pike he wrapped in a square of birch bark. Every bit of that fish was valuable, the teeth furnishing unlimited fish hooks, sharp and hard as steel; the intestines made good thongs for binding the teeth to wooden casting lures. The tough skin would make yet stronger thong material.

Night was now coming on fast. Dan cut a withe with a fork on it and went into the brush to make a balsam "caterpillar." This consisted of radiating balsam-sprays, hooked around the withe, in layers above the fork. It was dark by the time the caterpillar was three feet high, a thick green bundle of balsam fronds two feet in diameter and heavy to lug into camp.

This balsam browse would be cold to sleep in. It needed covering with a warm, dry material, so Dan raked out all his needles and dry leaves and then built a sort of long nest with balsam sprays underneath for him and Pepper. This he lined with his dry stuff, then set about preparing the fire for the night. By the process of burning his logs in two, he now had quite a lot of short trunks, about five inches thick. Cutting two hornbeam saplings, which are almost unburnable, Dan drove them in the ground slanting backward in front of his den. Against these he piled the logs, one on the other, until they rose about thirty inches high. Across a pair of stone andirons, in front of the backlogs, he laid a grid of small dead saplings broken by smashing them against a tree trunk.

Above this went a pyramid of bark, sticks, dry roots, and a lot of white pine knots salvaged from a rotting trunk near by. Touching this off from his other fire, he had a blaze six feet high. Inside the shelter the heat was unbearable. The two of them worked around the fire in the night, Dan dragging the heaviest prone saplings he could carry. Crossing their butts over the fire in pairs, he had the fuel for a self-renewing fire. Pepper soon went into the shelter and curled up in the bed. Dan hovered around, tending his precious bathing trunks, which were still damp, and collecting more wood.

Finally he crept into the warm hut, burrowed down into the browse and backed up against Pepper. He soon fell sound asleep. Twice during the night he roused, to pull the charred ends of his dead woods over the fire, and then knew no more until the gray light of dawn stealing through the forest told him that the first day of his big tournament with Dame Nature was over. So far it had all been on his side.



Chapter V

ARROW VERSUS ANTLER

The lake was bright and deceitful as Dan awoke to a high sun and rolled out of his leaf pile to look at it. The wind had shifted to northwest. Small waves lapped cheerfully on the shore of his campsite. The islands out beyond loomed mistily as in a mirage and formed a kind of breakwater to the larger waves. Beyond them Lac Seul would still be utterly untrustworthy, even if he should build a log catamaran and try to cross it. The raft would be racked apart in any heavy sea.

Dan had had in mind building such a raft and going in search of his canoe. That first look at the lake bade him beware. Only in a flat calm that would hold for sometime could it be tried. And those lazy days were gone now.

Both Dan and Pepper were hungry again. There was the other side of the pike for a steak, but Dan had always had a cereal of some sort for breakfast. He decided to boil the remaining lily tubers; that would not take long. He raked together the fire embers, put on more wood, and then went to the nearest birch tree for his boiling bowl. He peeled off a

piece of bark a foot and a half square, folded it into a box, and skewered the end triangles together with green shoots of vibernum. Another piece he cut in a circle, folded it to a cone and thrust a cleft stick over the fold to make a deep birch-bark ladle. Dan knew that thin birch bark would pass heat like sheet iron and not burn, providing there was water inside. He filled the box from the lake, put in the tubers and set it on the bed of embers to boil. The pike steak was set up on the maple club before a separate, high-flaming fire.

While they were cooking, the youth did some sober thinking. He had a store of food and fishing tackle that would get him more. Should he attempt the hike back to Superior Junction? As a plane flies, it was probably not more than fifty miles from his present camp.

To the inexperienced it might seem quite easy; to Dan it was dangerous in the extreme, if not impossible. All his maps were gone. He remembered vaguely a long stream running into Lac Seul to the south of him. It had a pond at the head of it and was dammed full of beavers' backwaters, one could be sure. Its swamps meant a long detour. What lay beyond it he could not recall. Either dense forests of black spruce or else barren-ground uplands, till you came to the Sturgeon. A hundred miles, at least, of exploring through the trackless wilderness. . . .

"My feet, Pepper," he said, "would never make it. One bad cut, a broken big toe, and you and I would be stopped; help-

less, unable to move, perhaps miles from the nearest water. . . . Far better to stay here and make ourselves a complete outfit. It's all in the forest, all about us. I might even make another canoe, if there is time. If not, the lake will freeze over by October and we can cross."

Dan scratched at the numerous tiny red points where the gnats had got down through the leaves to his body during the night.

"There's another thing, Pepper. Swamps and muskeg mean swarms of mosquitoes and I have no grease against them. We need clothing and a pair of moccasins. We'll have to begin by bagging a snowshoe hare. That means a bow."

Pepper wagged his tail approvingly. He had downed his half of the pike steak in two gulps and licked up the tubers for trimming. He was quite ready for adventure. Dan gave some thought to his bow. Of all the woods for it, the red and white cedars were the most easily available. The red cedar would give him a strong bow of about forty-five pounds pull, but he had no cord strong enough for it. The white cedar would give him a sweet bow, of fine springy cast, that would season quickly and not take a set as ash and hickory would. It would be of some twenty-five pounds pull; ample to drive an arrow clear through a snowshoe hare or a grouse. The cord for it would have to be at least a hundred pounds in strength. Dan decided that a thong cut from his belt would have that strength.

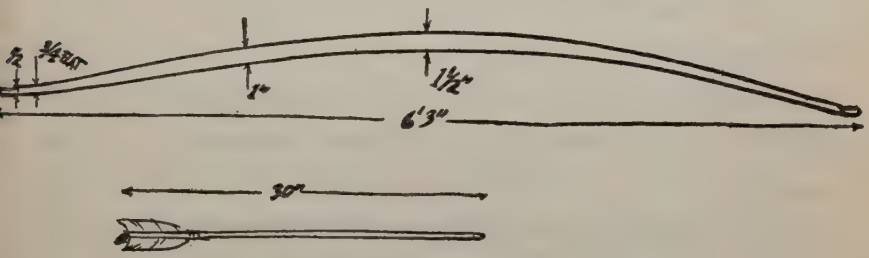
He got up and went to a fine, straight young specimen of arborvitae growing near camp. It was some two inches thick at the butt and fourteen feet tall. A period of notching with the knife brought it down. Dan lopped off its small busy branches and cut off the top at the point where it was about an inch thick. He brought the pole into camp, and, squatting, pulled off the bark. The wet white sapwood came to view. That this bow would season quickly was one of its best features. All the other woods took time; if sappy they would warp out of shape as soon as strung up.

Dan cut the length to a little over his own height—about six feet. He knew all about the short Indian bow, but that called for a very strong cord and was less accurate, though handier than the long bow. He dubbed down the lower end of the pole by chopping at it with his knife and stripping down the grain. When its upper and lower limbs became approximately the same strength, he began testing it by careful bending, the lower end on the ground, the upper end over the trunk of a gaunt white balsam that lay sloping down into the lake. His hand pushed down on the bow's center. About twenty-five pounds pressure, he judged. Dan hung it high above the fire to season, dangling it in the wind by a thong of cedar bark tied to a bent-over sapling. Immediately he set at arrow making.

A dead white pine sapling that had over twenty-four inches between its whorls gave him the best arrow material. Burn-

ing it into a stick thirty inches long over the fire, Dan split it in half with his knife and then split the halves into quarters. These gave him four straight-grained pieces of wood that whittled down easily to four straight arrows.

The arrows needed vanes to fly true, and he had no feathers as yet. Thin vanes of birch bark would answer for a few shots —by which time he would have bagged a grouse or he was no archer! Starting clefts at a hundred and twenty degrees in the



nock ends of his arrows, he slipped the thin papers of birch into them, the cock vane being double. The clefts would have to be lashed, lest the arrow split from the pressure of the bow cord, so he wrapped them with strings made from the frog's leg skins. Fire hardened at the heavy end, then, he had four serviceable arrows.

The morning was gone by the time Dan had cut two narrow thongs from his belt and joined them by a slit in the ends. All this time his bow had been exuding sap from the dry heat over the fire. It was about ready. He estimated it as 6′3″ long, 1½″ round in the middle, 1″ across the flat back by 1″

belly at mid-limbs, and ¾″ flat by ½″ deep at the ends. Stringing it up, he drew it slowly and carefully. Nice! It needed some shaving off the lower limb. He kept that the stronger, knowing that it would improve its cast. Then he set up a square of birch bark in front of a thick ground-pine bush and let go at it at twenty paces.

Twang! The arrow flew over, pierced through the bark, and buried itself to the vanes in the bush.

"Old shootin' eye still good, Pep!" Dan said. "Let's see how the other arrows are."

They flew high and low with the same holding, so he made a little twig balance and whittled them all down to the same weight. This was essential, unless he was to try to remember the peculiarities of each arrow. And he had none to lose; he needed hits with the least possibility of error.

"No time for a quiver now, Pep," he said. "I'm hungry!"

They set off along a deer trail. Pepper was not long in loosing his peculiar squeak of a bark that told he saw game. Dan grabbed his collar and ordered him sternly to heel. There was a rustling in the bushes under a big spruce. He peered and saw a large cock grouse stopped short, eyeing the dog nervously and preparing to fly up into the tree. Dan would rather have him on the ground, for the sake of his arrow.

Quietly he raised the bow arm, the palm of his thumb pressing against the handle, his fingers gripping it lightly. Slowly the thong was drawn to below his right jaw. Dan

looked along his arrow, judged the distance at fifteen paces, saw the grouse about two feet above his arrow point. His eye was five inches above the nock, and you had to allow for it. How much he knew by experience.

Twang! A drumming of fluttering wings as the arrow transfixed the grouse. Pepper dashed in to seize the bird in his teeth and bring it proudly to Dan.

"Good dog! Everything we want, Pep, except fur."

Its meat was food, its bill-mandibles arrow points, its feathers vanes, its intestines a bow-thong for the war bow. Dan felt that they might as well wander on, in spite of hunger. It would save another trip away from camp, and he had lots to do. He needed two snowshoe hares before going back. They got both of them within the hour. Pepper would get a hot scent with his nose and start off into the forest, barking his squeaky bark. Dan remained quietly on the deer trail, bow ready. He knew that the hare would circle back, and could tell by Pepper's barks just where he was. Both times the hare squatted and froze on seeing Dan standing in the trail. The bow did the rest.

They went back to camp for a busy afternoon. Dan unstrung the bow and set it to season some more. He had two hareskins and a grouse skin, ripped off entire by slitting the breast and drawing out the raw body. Every bit of his plunder was valuable—bones, fur, feathers, intestines, meat. He tanned the skins roughly with wood ashes rubbed on the skin

side and sewed the two hare furs together with willow bark thread, so as to have a night covering that the gnats could not penetrate. Sunset found him feathering the arrows with grouse pinions, all taken from the same wings so that their backs would face the same. The Indians used long vanes, probably for a lower trajectory at short range. Dan could never figure out why, since all archers use the short vane, but he decided to be humble and imitate. The Indians never did anything without a good reason for it.

He felt quite wealthy now. He had quantities of fresh meat; fish whenever he wanted one. Moccasins and bone arrowheads would be his job tomorrow. He could plan ahead on getting a buck deer. But that would take a war bow and heavy arrows.

That night he had a refreshing sleep under the snowshoe hare blanket. In the morning they had a stew of meat chunks and lily roots; then Dan cut a birch-bark pattern around his foot and folded and cut it over the instep to be sure of a fit. The leg furs from his blanket made passable moccasins when slit and cut to this pattern. It was weak fur, but it would do till he had bagged a buck.

The morning was gone when the moccasins were sewed up and the thongs put in through slits in the uppers. He and Pepper could now range and explore for some distance. The soles of his feet were fairly tough, but they had nothing like the hardness that came from going barefoot a long time.

They spent the afternoon looking for a juniper—red cedar. The search for one led them back up a deer trail to the high ground giving on a ravine. This valley was filled with a black spruce and tamarack swamp. The slopes were covered with blue huckleberry and service-berry clumps. Opposite them a black bear was feeding and Pepper's bristles arose along his spine as he barked a challenge.

Dan held his collar. "We'll get you some day, Bear Person!" he called over. "Sorry, but what a sleeping bag you have on you! And bear grease for frying, eh, Pep?"

The bear went right on shoveling berries into his mouth, stalks and all, with a deft movement of his paw. He was not afraid of the dog, nor of Dan either. Once he sat up to look at them, his furry ears cocked. Then he went down on all fours again, satisfied that they were not hostile.

Dan fell to on the berries with a vim. He craved sugar, and, still more, salt. Sugar will satisfy the craving somewhat and that is the reason for putting berries in pemmican. The heights of land on both sides of the ravine were covered with great boulders among which grew straight green plumes of junipers. Dan selected one, after having filled up on berries. It was much harder hacking than was the white cedar, but at length he got it down and trimmed it to bring back to camp.

"We'll take a look at this brook flowing out of the swamp before we go, Pep," Dan said. "It's full of small trout, I'll bet! We need a site for a fish trap."

They picked up the rivulet in the Lac Seul direction. It swarmed with trout. There were pools that would only need blocking at the lower end with a willow-wand weir and a big stone gate at the upper end to make a trout refrigerator that would supply the larder indefinitely. It was while choosing a good pool that Dan made a discovery that brought a shout of joy to his lips. A stray from farther south grew on the warm north bank of the brook, a trailing vine with arrow-shaped leaves that wound round and round a small sapling.

"Groundnut, Pep! Oh, boy! Good as potatoes." Dan lost no time in digging along its roots. A quantity of small tubers, from marble to hen's egg size, were unearthed. In the old days settlers depended on the groundnut entirely till their first potato crop was in. "Gee, I'm beginning to need a pack basket with all these things to carry!" Dan cried out happily. Indeed the groundnuts were so small and so many that no hands could carry them.

His good friend the canoe birch had a pack basket ready for him. Cutting and peeling off a large square of bark from the nearest tree, Dan folded it to a deep cone and skewered it in shape with a straight shoot of vibernum. He had seen an Objibway pack basket; he had but to imitate. Hunting up a three-forked moosewood bush, he trimmed it and thrust the cone down into the three prongs. Lashings of cedar bark secured it in place, and he made a carrying harness of the same material.

The cone had room for more than all the groundnuts that could be dug. The two explorers returned to the berry patch and topped the nuts off with a layer of dessert. On this barren ground grew also the puffball fungus, and Dan added a large one to his plunder. He would need it for carrying fire. An ember buried in its powdery interior would smolder there for hours.

Back at camp, Dan set about the serious business of preparing for an encounter with a buck deer. There is no more dangerous animal in the woods than he at this season, just before the leaves turn. He is full of fight then, and more than a match for any man.

Dan knew a good deal about the penetration of arrows. Driven by a heavy war bow, they are more fatal than a bullet. The broadhead cuts through muscle and bone, making a terrible wound. You have but to wait.

But he could not shoot and wait with this deer. The buck would charge home. No arrow could stop him. Dan thought of Indian methods, then, and was reminded that he needed a war club as well as the bow and his spear. The woods Indians preferred the gunstock club that looks something like a hockey stick, with a stone blade jutting from the angle.

He dubbed down his juniper pole to bow shape as his first task. Its wood was hard and springy. The white sap wood made the broad flat back of the bow; the red heartwood its belly. The stave needed a pronounced "dip" cut on each side

of the handle, so stiff was it. Dan cut its length as short as he dared, exactly his own height. The shorter the more powerful; but he could not depend too much on the thong that he had braided from hare gut. Not till he had deer sinew could he be sure of no disastrous break at some dangerous instant of shooting! It worried him.

While the bow was seasoning over the fire, he made four long, sharp arrowheads from the leg bones of the hares. The hollow tubes of these fitted over a shoulder cut for some length on the arrow shafts. The heads required long and tedious grinding over a granite ledge till they were smooth and sharp. Dan found a spall of granite, roughly spear-shaped, that would do for his club. The club itself he cut of maple and gouged out a socket for the stone with his knife. Setting the stone firmly in the angle of the club with rawhide thongs cut from his rabbit fur, he felt armed at last for close-quarters attack.

All this took so much time that they ran out of food. Dan accordingly called Pepper on the third day and they went to the trout brook to make a fish weir. Out of willow wands and cedar bark he wove a grid two feet square, and then built a dam across the lower end of their pool. Down into the mud of its gate he drove the weir sticks and secured them to stout stakes on either side. A second dam went across the upper end of the pool. A large flat rock was set aside to be its gate.

"There, Pep!" said Dan as they watched the muddy water

clear and the brook purling through the grid of the weir. "Now to fill our trout ice-box. We might as well get ready to cook some while we are at it."

He had brought along his light bow and the pack basket. Out of the puffball fungus in it he dumped a live coal and built it to a flame with curls of yellow birch. An Indian stick-fire was the medicine this time. He smashed a number of dead balsam poles over rock edges till he had a circle of clubs all around the fire. Their ends were pushed together as they burned away.

Dan then cut a young balsam sapling that was so shade-killed that only its top tuft was green. Lopping off its lower twigs, he had what he called a "scare-stick." He and Pepper went upstream with it and Dan began thrusting his brushy pole end into every deep hole and nook and cave along the bank. These were all hiding places for the wary trout. With Pepper barking excitedly and dashing in after the stick, they worked downstream till they arrived at the upper gate. Dan closed it with his flat stone and they waited.

Gradually the basin cleared of roiled waters. The dark olive-green backs of trout appeared—at least fifty of them, swimming against the current with their heads upstream.

"Gee, Pep!" Dan cried joyfully. "Only look at our ice box! I'd like to make a fish spear, but I can't wait!"

He jabbed in the brush pole and threw trout after trout flapping out on the bank. Pepper nabbed them, aided by Dan

on his knees with ready knife. The pool was all muddy again but they did not care—they had five. These were split and broiled over the fire on birch forks. "Won't do though, Pep," Dan said when satisfied. "We'll have to make a fish spear to bring home any supply. Pool gets too muddy to see 'em!"

A young forked maple supplied the spear. It did not take long to whittle its forks into two barbed prongs. A sharp needle of fire-hardened maple Dan sank into a hole drilled with his knife-point in the crotch of the fork. With this spear, catching a trout was easy. He had but to poise it over its back, allow for the refraction of the water, and give a quick jab. The trout came up thrashing between the prongs and impaled by the skewer. The basket was full when they started home.

The war bow was now hard and dry. Dan strung it up and drew it carefully. Sharp pains in the muscles of his drawing arm told him that it would be at about the limit of his strength. The thong hurt his fingers cruelly. He needed finger-guards immediately. The bow was all of sixty pounds pull.

He spent the afternoon making three finger-guards from rabbit skin and then he and Pepper went grimly forth to war. They knew where to go. Across from Dan's lily-pad cove was a trail where the deer came down to drink. He had kept away from there purposely, lest they abandon it. He and Pepper now circled the cove through the forest. His war club was thrust in his belt and he carried the war bow, the four arrows, and a spear shaft with his knife lashed to it. Pepper

kept strictly at heel. The dog knew by Dan's stern tones that some unusual adventure was afoot.

He found the trail worn a foot wide with the innumerable tracks of deer in the muddy soil. Dan followed the trail down toward the water till he came to a sharp crook. Here he studied his wind and the best position to wait. On Lac Seul the wind was, as usual, blowing gustily, but here in the cove the wind was vagrant, what there was of it drifting in from the north. Dan paced off thirty strides from the bend and chose a bushy hemlock to the leeward of the trail. He wanted that buck at least thirty yards off when he came in sight around the bend! Once before, unarmed, he had encountered a buck, at this season, and he had saved his life only by waiting till the buck was close up and then jumping out at him from behind a tree with a wild Comanche yell and a shy of his hat. The startled buck had made off in twenty-foot bounds. This time he wanted the buck, and it meant a sure charge!

They waited while sunset neared. Then a faint footfall sounded up the trail. A doe came around the bend, stepping daintily, a fawn close behind her. She stopped, her big ears turning to catch the slightest hint of danger, her beautiful large eyes searching the forest. Then she gazed fixedly at the hemlock bush.

Dan closed his fingers carefully over Pepper's muzzle. The dog was quivering all over and itching to fly at her. She was meat, clothing, sinew, bone implements—everything—to the

woodsman; but Dan's sportmanship forbade. No does! And particularly no starving fawns!

She went on and they heard her drinking at the edge of the lily pads. The buck would surely follow. He was not long in coming. A second and heavier footfall sounded. Dan had stuck his three arrows upright in the duff, the fourth on the string. His spear leaned against the hemlock bush; the club was handy to snatch out of his belt. Thump! Thump! Thump! A large eight-point buck had come around the bend and stood pawing the ground angrily, his ears twitching. His eyes were fixed on the hemlock bush. Dan got Pepper's head between his knees and rose with bowstring drawn to the jaw.

"Whew! Whew!" The buck whistled, emphatically. Up went the black triangle of his flag with the white border around it—a sure sign of hostility. He stamped and pawed the ground fiercely. Before he could lower his antlers. . . .

Twang! The arrow hummed over sharply and buried itself deep in his chest. Instantly the buck lowered his antlers and charged. Dan released Pepper and swiftly strung his second arrow. Pepper, rasping murderous snarls, dashed to meet his antagonist. The buck thrashed at Pepper with his tines, and

that turned him so that Dan drove his second arrow to the vanes into his brisket muscles.

It did not stop him in the least! With Pepper clinging valiantly to a hock, the buck was upon Dan, rearing high with his sharp fore-hoofs stabbing wickedly. It was kill or be killed! Dan leaped back, dragged out the war club, and struck fiercely at those flying hoofs. Already he was bleeding from a painful stab. The buck wheeled and gored downward with his tines. Dan smashed at them with all his force —only to have the club fly out of his hand with the recoil. His fingers tingled numb; but the buck was now following up his advantage with determined thrusts of the sharp tines. Dan felt one pierce his side. He went down and rolled over and over, striving to reach his spear. The buck was close after him with dig upon dig, his eyes flaming with murder. Dan grabbed the spear shaft and rolled behind the hemlock, then squirmed to his feet and charged in his turn. The knife blade sank to the hilt in the buck's throat. At the same time, Pepper released his hock hold and came springing around to leap up and fasten his jaws high up in the throat. His weight brought the buck down on one side. Dan staggered back and drove his spear home once more, straight into the heart. It was all over.

For a time the buck lay gasping and kicking. Then he sighed and there was a rattle in his throat as the life went out and he lay still.

Dan tottered over him. "I'm sorry, buck . . ." Dizzy and weak, he uttered the Indian's apology to the soul of the animal. The victory had been won at a terrible cost! Already his hand sought that aching gash in his left shoulder muscles, where a hoof had pierced. It was not bleeding much; but somehow he felt faint.

"Come off him, Pep!" Dan ordered his dog sternly. Pepper was still growling and worrying at the warm carcass and had no feelings of apology. "You did fine, old fellow!" Dan praised him. "Gee! I feel—queer . . ."

He sat down with his back against a sapling. Feeling around on his side where that tine went in, Dan was surprised that his fingers came away bright red with arterial blood. Great fear shocked him out of his stupor. *This* must be stopped, at all cost, or he would bleed to death! With the last of his strength, he crawled over to the buck, grasped a twist of the loose white belly fur, and sawed it off with his spear knife. Reversing it over his finger, Dan thrust it deep into the wound, and then lost consciousness.

Chapter VI

GRAY DEATH

It was dark when Dan knew anything at all again. He stirred uneasily and groaned. Something insistent seemed to be singing in his ears. As he regained his wits, he placed it—the ringing call of the whippoorwill. He opened his eyes to find the long twilight of the North nearly gone. The bird was whistling in a nearby thicket on the lakeside, and it had wakened Dan out of the stupor into which he had fallen.

Pepper jumped up and came over, whining softly as his master stirred. Dan looked around, bewildered for an instant; then memory and thought returned with a rush. All his immediate problems came crowding in upon him. He was sore wounded and night was coming on. The big bulk of the buck lay a dim shadow under the trees. Its carcass had to be protected from wolves that very night, lest all their toil and

pain should go for nought. At the same time, the fire over at camp must not be allowed to die.

The two wounds throbbed as Dan tried to move. The one in his shoulder had not bled much, but it hurt so that to move that arm nearly made him faint again. The other, in his side, was a deep one, and he very much feared something vital had been injured. Dan felt around there with the back of his left hand, and it came away wet. That wound still bled. And, as if to add an unnecessary burden to his load of misery, a soft rain began to patter down on the leaves overhead.

Dan groaned again. Nature might at least, in pity, have withheld that rain. It meant no end of trouble, perhaps death itself, in his present weak state. There was but one ruler of the world, Dan realized, God, Wahkondah, The Great Spirit. Call Him what you would, He was there, in the soul of man. It was He who gave those priceless qualities, courage, determination, endurance, humility. They were so real that Dan could almost feel and touch them within him. So real that, without them, the death of a gibbering idiot could be his fate. He who worshipped Nature wasted his prayers on a stone image. The Indian knew; he did not worship Nature, but the Master of Life. The words of the poet Lanier came ringing into mind as Dan took refuge in his courage: "I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God."

With that as a battle cry, he faced his sea of troubles. He found the spear buried in the leaves nearby and unlashed his

knife. With it he cut a long strip from the leg of the deer and bound a thick compress of dry leaves over the wound in his side. It seemed to Dan, as he considered it all, that the most important thing to do was to save his fire. Once the rain got the best of that, he might have a great deal of trouble starting another. In damp weather, with damp wood, a friction fire is none too easy to start. If only he had fire here, all would be well. Where he was, camp was, so long as he could reach about and make himself comfortable. But to leave the buck carcass was to invite wolves. The smell of this kill would carry far. They might even have to defend it this very night.

The raindrops were now pattering down through the leaves. Although it was not raining any harder, the leaf surfaces were wet, and they now let drop their surplus. The stinging drops, as they fell on his bare skin, seemed to revive Dan, and they gave him an idea. Why not try swimming the cove? It was but a short distance across it to his camp; around by the forest and across the backwater swamp it had been a long march. An almost impossible one at night, but, swimming on his back, he could make that two hundred yards fairly easily, using his left arm alone.

Dan got to his feet. His legs staggered under him so that he sat down again abruptly by the buck carcass. He was weak and needed food, that was it! Dan had another idea, now. He would make Pepper tow him over, helping all he could himself. He cut a thick slice of brawn from the deer's ham, ate

some himself, and gave the rest to Pepper. The raw meat seemed to take hold like a live coal. Dan felt less wobbly; his head cleared as he munched mechanically at the tough, raw meat. Then he took off his belt and made a collar of it for Pepper, leading him down to the lake by the long end of it.

"Hie on, Pep—*Hip!—Ssuey!*" Dan encouraged his dog as they waded in. Pep hung back. He did not like the idea at all. The cold water felt delicious as it rose around Dan. There was a shock as it reached his side wound, and another as his shoulders submerged; but on the whole it was a good feeling and it killed a rising fever. For a time he led Pepper, kicking ahead with the dog following unwillingly. But once well out on the still water, out from under the black shadow of the forest that lay on it like ink, Pepper suddenly started full speed for the opposite shore. Dan grasped the belt and swam with him and they made famous time. The last lap was a furious rush, even the bad arm taking a part.

They were just in time. The fire hissed and steamed as every falling drop drew a new protest from quenched embers. But underneath, buried in the ashes, and on the underside of logs, there was still fire. Dan hurriedly drew these coals together, blowing them vigorously to life. A small flame finally licked out from under one billet-edge, and he protected it with all the remaining wet and dry brands whose undersides would be dry and inflammable. By the time a

sickly fire was creeping up through them, he felt safe to start making a rain shield over the flames. Two stout poles were laid over the backlogs from behind; across them he laid smaller poles lengthwise of the fire, and then he robbed his browse bed for a thatch.

The fire responded nobly. It climbed to a generous flame while Dan began skinning out the hare. He and Pepper needed food now and lots of it. Half an hour later the quarters were broiling before a hot bed of coals and the rabbit skin lay over Dan's shoulders like a cape. He lifted the rain shield off the poles and set it aside for the fire was now big enough to defy any rain. Pepper, from where he sat, tied to a bush, kept turning himself from side to side under its rays. Dan had no idea of having him curl up in the browse, wet through as he was. He himself had dried out quickly, but the water had opened up the wound in his side again and it had been bleeding steadily. This time he stanched it with a flat pad of rabbit skin, the raw side smeared with blood. The fire soon dried it out, and he realized that he would have to keep quiet for the rest of the night, if possible.

"Pep, old boy, you'll have to mount guard—I'm going to rest a while—I've got to!" Dan apologized. He staggered into the shelter and lay down wearily in the bed. The rain sifted down softly. Pep whined; but after a time he accepted the situation and curled up as near the fire as he could get. Dan felt drowsy and discouraged. A cold wind was stirring. The

roof leaked in several places. His wounds ached, and he felt very weak. Nature was a bitter antagonist! This storm covered a thousand miles and more of forest, and it would last three days. Long enough to obliterate him, as it would many another wounded and unfortunate animal. No one would know or care about it at all. It aroused in Dan an intense pity for the little dumb brothers of the forest. It was a cruel fight for them! Man himself could only survive by careful planning and unfaltering courage. In all this world there was but one real quality, courage. Around that rock man could rally; but without it he was lost. Life seldom gave a single moment of unalloyed joy, there was always a thorn to prick. He himself, in the hour of his triumph over that buck, lay stricken down with cold and wounds. On the other hand, life never gave an hour of deepest depression without its ray of hope. With Dan that hope was that the buck was too fresh-killed to reach the nostrils of any passing timber wolf. There was just a chance that it would not be molested that night. He decided to trust to Pepper and not stir unless he really must.

He was dozing off wearily, when down through the timber stole a faint call. *A-ooooo. . . . Oooooh!* It came, whispering through the hills. Dan roused and raised his stiff and sore body to listen. In the dim light of the fire he could see Pepper's head raised and his ears pricked up. In his throat a deep growl rumbled.

"They're hunting, tonight. The scent is prime in this damp-

ness. But I doubt if it's our buck. Down, Pep! Quiet!" The wolf did not repeat his try, so Dan gradually dozed off again.

He did not know how much later it was when he was again aroused by Pepper's savage barking. The dog was straining at his tether and barking with all his might toward the cove. Quieting him, Dan listened. There was no doubt of it—*something* was at the buck carcass! Faint noises came across the cove in the intense stillness. There were rustlings in the duff; a champing and clicking; heavy breathings.

Dan jumped out and poked up the fire. He dumped on it a whole armful of dry browse. He yelled across the cove. A puff of dense smoke arose, followed by a high burst of flame. They watched by its light. Pepper was barking madly. Two glowing green eyes flashed at them from out of the dense brush. Whether it was a small animal or a large one they could not tell; but it was only one. Then came a low grunt, distinct, echoing.

"Bear or porky, Pep! Wounds or no wounds, we've got to get moving!"

Dan set swiftly to work splitting a white pine knot into long fat slivers. These he wrapped in ribbons of birch bark and then put aside while he piled on wood to make the fire give plenty of light. A large, dry trunk lay inclined down the beach, its end ice-broken where it had entered the water. A few of its roots still clung to a remnant of soil. These Dan cut loose. Then, seizing a pole he pried at the log. It lifted a foot

as he heaved. The two wounds were aching again, but he did not heed them. To save that buck carcass was vital! Again and again he lifted and pried at the log. Little by little it turned parallel to the beach. Breaking off its few stubs with rocks, Dan rolled it over and soon had it afloat.

Then he lashed his hunting knife to a stout pole and lit the fat pine torch. Under its glare he and Pep set out, Dan straddling the log and the dog swimming. Slowly they progressed across the cove. Dan leaped ashore and untied Pepper. He still held his leash, for he was not sure even yet that their visitor was not a bear. No defiant *Whoosh* had, however, greeted him. Cautiously he advanced, torch held high, spear and leash gripped in his almost useless right hand.

At length the buck carcass loomed up—but there was nothing around it! A steady clicking came, however, from high above them. Looking up they saw a large brown animal clinging to the trunk of a tree.

"Quilly-pig!" Dan whooped, loosing Pepper. The dog leaped to the tree and barked up it. Dan searched for his bow and then drew the bone-piled arrow out of the buck. He drew it to the head, aimed carefully and let drive. It soared out into the night and was lost.

"Missed him, by ginger!" he exclaimed, ruefully. Then he paused. Perhaps it was better after all. In his present excited state the dog would be quite likely to worry that porcupine—and there would be an awful session with those quills!

He tied Pepper up and then shook the tree. The porcupine tumbled out and waddled clumsily off as Dan followed with his spear. A single drive and that particular marauder lay kicking his last. Dan let Pepper rave and went over to examine the buck. No great damage had been done; merely some of the under parts torn and gnawed. He collected dead wood and put the torch to it. Victory! The buck and the fire were together, at last!

He hung up the porcupine and released the indignant dog. Nothing mattered now! Dan felt a delicious laziness coming over him as he sank down against the buck with the dog in his arms. The carcass was still a little warm but wet. All he had to do was to keep up the fire and lie there until daylight. Slowly the dog dried out, while his own heat warmed the space behind him in the buck's pelt. After a while Dan felt drowsy again and went to sleep.

It was gray dawn when he awoke to find it still raining. He felt hot and cold all over. His right shoulder was stiff and sore, and the side wound was hot and feverish. Dan knew that he was in for it. Only hot water, as hot as he could bear it, would keep down the inflammation that had set in.

"I've got two things to do—right sudden soon!" he told himself, "get this buck to camp, and get that wound where I can stay quiet. To raft him over is the quickest way, and it's worth the struggle."

He paunched the buck and hung up the intestines for

future use. Then he tied Pepper to one of the deer's antlers and seized the other one himself. The buck weighed all of one hundred and seventy pounds. It was stiff, and hard to budge, but little by little they dragged it head first to the shore. Dan strapped it to the log with his belt and then shoved off into deep water. They made slow progress, little more than a drift, but steadily and doggedly he kicked out behind the log.

He was utterly exhausted by the time he had reached the beach in front of camp and crawled out. He was more cheerful, however, than he had been since he had lost the canoe. He had all the game in his hands, now. Every bit of that buck was useful. There was meat enough for the long trip to Saint Joseph. It would give him clothes, moccasins, an ax, unlimited arrow-heads as soon as he could find a flint nodule and use the hard antler tines for a flaker. There were sinews for bow thongs and sewing thread—truly that buck was a woodland treasure!

"Now, Pep, for some food!" Dan laughed, dragging the buck up on the granite, end by end. He cut out the liver and hung it on his maple broiling club. Clean strips of caul-fat dangled in front of it. The fire blazed up as he added flaming trash. Presently the fat began to sizzle and the liver to cook and turn brown. As soon as it was done, boy and dog bolted the whole of it.

Dan lay back in the browse, out of the rain, full-fed and comfortable. He had all day before him in which to skin out

that robe. There was no hurry about anything. The wound in his side, however, soon ached unbearably. Taking off the compress, he found it hot and angry. Pus came from it, and it needed dressing. Dan got the old birch-bark box and set it on the coals once more. It was getting pretty scorched and frazzled, but it would do for this last time, he thought. He made a big compress of shredded cedar bark and dipped it in the bowl when too hot to bear his fingers in it. When applied to the wound, it scalded like fire, but immediately he felt better.

After a period of this treatment he started on the buck's skin. All the part around its sides and back came loose by the mere sweep of his hand, but everywhere else it took long and careful cutting away of ligaments and binders. By noon the pelt was off. Dan cut a thong from its edge and hung the skin up over the fire by a long pole. A stick stretched across the gambrel joints of the deer's hind legs spread it out. The wind blew the skin about in the smoke. This art of rough-smoking was one Dan had learned as a boy from the Arapahoes.

While the pelt was drying, he collected firewood for the night. He felt really sick, now, and wanted to do nothing more than wrap up in that deer robe and lie still. He dreaded the coming of night. The whole camp reeked of fresh butchered deer, and the scent would carry for miles in this damp wind that was blowing. Dan's last act was to cut a couple of hardwood clubs and lash his knife to a pole for a spear once

more. Then, with the war bow and arrows handy, he took down the hide, wrapped up in it, and crept into the shelter. There Pepper soon joined him.

It was dark when a bitter snarl from Pepper awoke him. The howl of timber wolves was ringing down from the hinterland, quite near now, and more than one of them. The fire was steaming sourly in its ashes and the rain coming down steadily. Dan crawled out and threw on a heap of dry browse from his shelter. He was dizzy and feverish, but this menace had roused him so that he became wide awake and alert. The buck carcass would have to be defended. The wolves had winded it and were coming. Fire, and plenty of it, would be his first defense; after that bow, spear, and club.

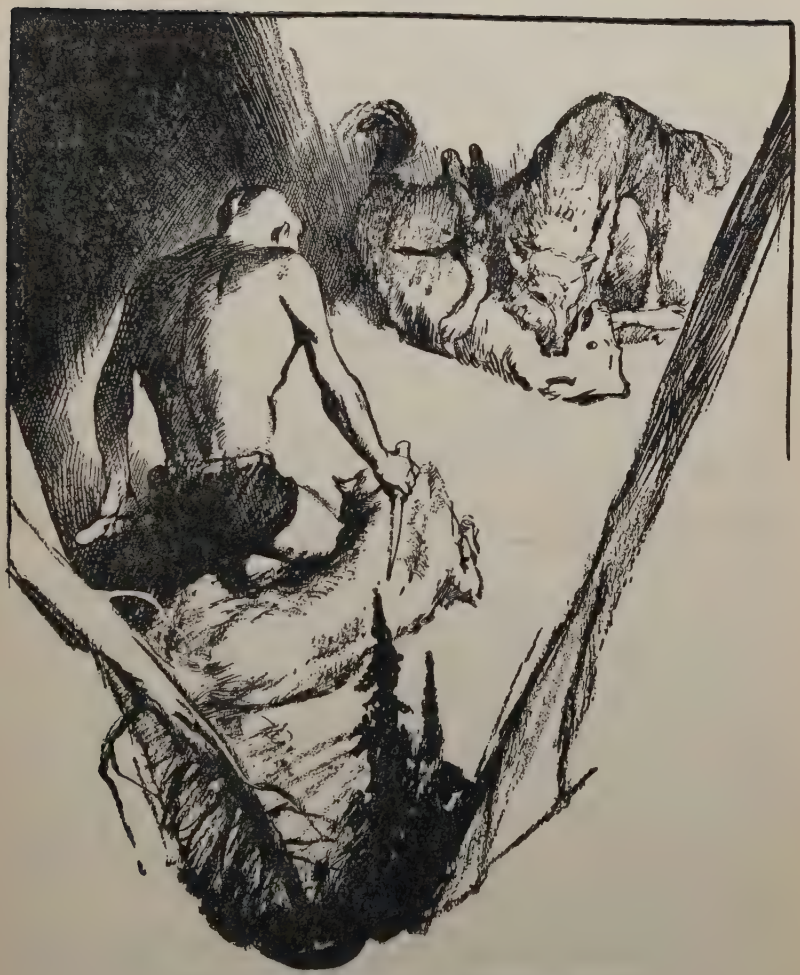
A rustling in the forest. Green eyes shone from the black depths under the spruces. Dan and Pepper stood side by side behind the fire, the dog with bristly mane erect, the youth with arrow on bow and two others stuck in front of him in the duff. The wolves were circling. There was a patter of feet in the underbrush, and then silence. A gray shape faced them, motionless, watching.

Pepper's continuous snarling suddenly rose to a volley of savage barks. The dog sprang out to the right of the campfire. Dan turned and saw the bared fangs of a huge timber wolf glistening in the firelight. It was not twenty feet from the buck carcass. The wolf advanced one brawny foreleg, warily. His ears were flattened back and the ruff of fur under

his throat puffed out until his head had lost all shape. He was twice as big as Pepper and weighed three times as much. Dan realized that they would have their hands full with even two such brutes. There were at least three—how many more he could not guess.

The big wolf developed his attack, inch by inch, ready for his sudden spring. Dan drew his war arrow to the head. When sure that it bore full on, he let drive. The arrow sped with a short, whistling plunge. There was a yelp of pain from the big wolf, and the next instant he sprang on Pepper, snarling horribly. The two clashed in a furious riot of ripping fangs, Pepper's yells telling that he was being terribly punished. Dan leaped forward with a lunge of his spear that drove the wolf headlong.

A swift rush of feet behind him gave him scarce time to face about. Pepper had whirled like a flash and dived clear under the belly of a second wolf which had charged in. Its gaping jaws were just above Dan's shoulder, its breath hot upon him. The brute missed his snap by a scant inch, and went down with a howl of agony as Pepper's jaws seized him underneath. Over and over they rolled, into the fire, smashing the shelter house like a pile of jackstraws, dog and wolf in a mad din of worrying fangs. Dan paused an instant to hurl a brand at a third wolf just crouching on the edge of the timber; then he dashed to battle, driving his spear into the wolf's side. Its death-howl mingled with a cry of



Pepper was down, nearly in the fire

pain from Pepper and an ominous snap that Dan distinctly heard above the melee.

Out of the tail of his eye Dan saw Pepper shake himself loose from the wolf's grip. The dog's right foreleg was hanging limp, broken, but Dan could not help him now. Before him, on the low bank of the forest roots at high water mark, crouched the third wolf. His attack was different from either of the others. His slanting, almond eyes squinted at them piglike; his ears were erect instead of laid back. Evidently this fellow was a crafty one and was planning something to throw them off their guard. His big round head lowered until the bristly mane showed high above it. He crept forward. Dan dropped his spear point; he feared a sudden rush under his guard.

The crafty one inched his way forward, now feinting to the right, now to the left, at Pepper. Then, without the slightest warning, he vaulted high in the air, straight for Dan. The youth slashed up savagely with his spear point, and the next instant one hundred and fifty pounds of timber wolf fell upon him, bearing him to the ground. He caught a glimpse of a fourth wolf overriding Pepper, and then his head struck rock and he saw stars.

For an instant Dan lay almost senseless. His head was in a pocket in the rocks, with the coarse fur of the wolf's belly completely covering him. The creature's breath came in huge sobs above him. It was done for, evidently. But terrible,

muffled sounds which came from where Pepper and the fourth wolf were fighting, told him he must be up and doing if he would save his dog.

Dan wriggled out from under the wolf. He saw that Pepper was down almost in the fire, the wolf over him, their jaws locked in a grip that could only mean victory for the wolf—and that in less than another ten seconds. Dan grabbed up his war club and leaped to the rescue. Here was a real test of the efficiency of this the most ancient of man's weapons. His first blow broke the back of the wolf, causing it to release Pepper in a prolonged yowl of agony. A second smash of the club drove back the wolf's muzzle; a third, following swift as light, batted him clear off the dog.

Dan rained down blows until the wolf lay kicking convulsively. He then went over to Pepper. The dog had not gotten up. His tongue licked out pitifully as Dan bent over him. The tears came with the dread foreboding that his chum was dying. A terrible gash had laid open the fur from Pepper's shoulder to the back of his left ear. The dog whined softly as Dan attempted to raise him. Pepper lifted a dangling foreleg, his voice almost speaking.

"Poor old pal! But we finished 'em all, boy, we sure did!" Dan said exultingly, glancing around at the four dead wolves. "You'll be well before you know it!"

Pepper wagged his tail feebly at the cheery tones. Dan cut a soft length of leg fur from the deer hide and bound up the

cut on Pep's neck. Another he set aside for a wrapping; then he whittled a splint from a length of balsam. He tied a thong gently around Pepper's muzzle so he couldn't bite.

"Steady, now, old-timer, I'll have to hurt you a bit." Dan grasped the broken foreleg, his knee crooked over Pepper's body. The dog whined and struggled violently, for Dan was pulling hard on the leg, and clamping the splint fast against the broken bones. Pepper's muscles held the two broken ends stubbornly past each other. With gentle force Dan stretched them until the bone pieces lay end-to-end. The splint held them from doubling over like a jackknife. The muscle tension pressed them together. Wrapping the deer strip around and around the splint, Dan soon had it firmly bound.

"We'll leave that muzzle on for a while, old scout, in case you try to gnaw off your bandage," Dan said. He picked up his heavy dog and carried him into the shelter.

The shelter itself was badly in need of repair. One whole side of it had been broken down and its poles had been scattered in the fight. Dan rebuilt it roughly, heaped on more duff to keep out the rain, and then crept inside, wrapping the deer skin around them both.

Chapter VII

THE BEAR TRAP FOR WABOOSH

Sunlight was shining and the fire was just a group of smoldering embers when Dan woke again.

"Gee, we're a hospital!" he cried. He looked at poor, forlorn Pepper and the ruin and desolation all around him. His own wound was red and angry again, so he made a little drain for it from an end of his trunk tape. Pepper's nose was hot and feverish; he, too, would be in for a siege. The forest sang with a soft, southwest wind and the sun felt warm and good. It was enough just to bask here for an hour before he gave the first thought to breakfast.

"I really need another tool, now," Dan said as he looked lazily around at the four wolf carcasses. "A scraper and adze combined—and I've got the thing to make it with, too—Pepper's collar buckle!"

He cut off the small bit of iron and looked it over carefully. Fastened securely in an ironwood crook all it would need would be the front edge flattened and sharpened to make a scraper. Dan grilled some tenderloin from the deer and fed himself and Pepper. Then he got a green stick, split the end, and drove the buckle frame into it. Heating the projecting frame red-hot, he beat it out flat with a hard stone and then ground it to an edge. It was two hours before he was ready for the club to hold it. A short hornbeam sapling with a knotty root served for this. Into a cleft sawed in it with his knife, he drove the buckle and secured it with wet rawhide. When these thongs shrank and dried, he would have a serviceable scraper for cleaning hides. Meanwhile Dan set at the long task of skinning the four wolf carcasses. By the time they were swinging over the fire it was nightfall again.

The next morning Pepper's wound was suppurating and his own smarting. Dan made a new birch bowl and heaped ashes for a fire of its own around it to keep it hot all the time. That scalding water was the only antiseptic he had. He dosed Pepper religiously. The dog had hardly moved, hardly eaten for nearly two days, but he would pull through. To be entirely alone, without even his dog, would be just a little too

much! He might even give up homemaking and try to push on to Saint Joseph if this spot was to be the site of Pepper's grave.

This day there was so much to do that Dan was kept in a flurry of work. The blowflies were busy at all the carcasses, and kept him busy scraping off their yellow egg deposits. Pepper's wound and his own cried out every half-hour for a new hot compress and relief. The buck venison must be smoked without delay. The four wolfskins dangled over the fire on as many poles, blowing about in the wind. They needed fleshing and scraping, but that could wait. High up in the trees Dan lashed a pole, and from it hung most of the wolf meat for Pepper's future use. Up there it was free from blowflies. By midafternoon Dan had a pole jerky frame set up with a fire of its own under it. All the deer meat but the two tenderloins cut from the backbone was hung on its saplings, in long narrow strips. A birch smudge smoked under them; in two days they would be as hard as wood, light and dry, a fine food for traveling.

Long white sinews, cut from the backs and legs of the deer and the wolves, were hung in skeins in the trees when Dan finally cooked a supper and turned in, tired out. He had saved practically everything from his battle spoils. He was rich, now, in the raw materials of woodcraft.

A craving for vegetable food greeted him next morning when the sun woke him up. This incessant meat diet was

getting tiresome. Dan set out for the cove on the log and brought back a big bundle of yellow lily roots.

"Pepper, it's about time we had a substantial pot!" grinned the boy as the dog greeted him from his nest in the shelter. "I'm going to risk breaking the knife for one."

He dragged a big, dry maple log to camp and set to work at it with a stone and his knife. Little by little he splintered out the hard, dead wood, hammering in the blade cautiously. After an hour's work he had a large trough that would hold several quarts. Over the fire a dozen smooth stones were set heating. At first they were black and covered with soot. Later they became white; clean as only fire can make them. Dan filled the trough with water and was ready for the stones. Lifting them out with a pair of green balsam tongs, he dipped them into the trough at one end. It took five of them to bring three quarts of water to boil. After that he had but to add a fresh stone every few minutes to keep the whole trough boiling violently. Sliced tubers and chunks of venison were at one end of the trough, and in the other a little hollow in the bottom collected the ash and dust from the stones. In half an hour the stew was done. Dan found that the leach from the ashes added a certain flavor that took, in part, the place of salt. It was this seasoning, he reflected, that made the Indians prefer stoneboiling to almost any other method.

Indian summer had set in and the days were warm and balmy. Even so, the deciduous trees steadily turned color. It

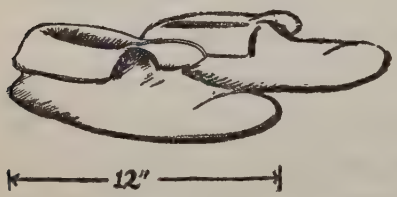
was easy, now, to find the few hickories that grew this far north. Their flaming yellows hung out like banners on the green hillsides. The red maple, too, disclosed its presence by its burst of color. Inside the shelter even the four wolf robes hardly served to keep out the cold of the nights. Their wounds healed. Pepper was out and about again in a week. Dan had not felt the need of any clothing as yet, but the trees were warning him that he would need some, very soon.

He remembered those few weeks afterward as the busiest time of his life. There was everything to do; for the winter, when it did set in, would be empty of all game and merciless with its cold. All stores had to be gathered now. Dan had tanned all the hides by scraping them, rubbing brains into every part, soaking and twisting the wet skins around a sapling with a club thrust through the tied legs, working them until they were dry and soft. All the fibers of the skin had to be broken fine by hauling over a beaming-edge if the skin was to be soft and pliant.

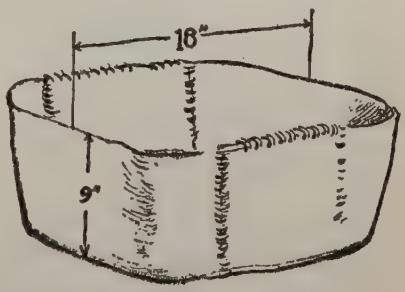
Then the increasing cold warned him that the sap would be down soon and his stores of birch bark must be peeled. Tree after tree he barked until his soaking pool held a large number of the white squares. He gathered watap fibers of the roots of the white spruce and soaked them for sewing thread. Making a sharp awl of a split bone, Dan sewed up a shingled roof of bark sheets for the shelter, and sewed in sides and a front to keep out the cold wind. When it was

finished he dug down to rock inside the shelter. The deeper in the earth his floor, the warmer would be his hut. Finally he built a stone fireplace, with a chimney, and roofed out the front of the hut to meet it in a big *A*. He now had a living room, out of the weather. It was ready before the first frosts came.

The night after that first frost, when Dan went outside to find all the rocks and needles covered with white hoarfrost, his first step on the frozen ground told him that even his tough soles would now need warm moccasins. Cutting a square from the deer robe, he trimmed it to a double *U* a foot long and the same wide. Folding this over on itself, he had the beginnings of a moccasin, with the fur inside. From the deer sinew he stripped fine threads, wet them, and twisted them on his thigh. Then he sewed the moccasins all along the seam, punching fine holes with a needle-like bone awl. The lower ends were bent around to form a heel; after cutting it in a little square to bend over the joint, this was sewed in to reinforce the two lapping ends. Then two long cuts were made in the "upper" to form a loose tongue. All the moccasin then needed was a pair of soft thongs to tie its uppers over this tongue around his instep.



Dan's next step was to make a birch basket for berrying. All the wild cherries up in the ravine were now loaded with dark, purple fruit. The simplest yet most roomy basket of them all looks hard to make, but in reality is the easiest. Dan took a large sheet of birch bark and cut it the form of a Greek cross, very like the center of the Swiss flag. Rounding the two sides of this, he bent up the two ends and sewed them with watap to a hoop of black ash. Then, folding the two sides, he trimmed them to match the edges of the basket and sewed the seams.



BIRCH BASKET.

"There Pep-dog!" he laughed. "If we could only find some blue clay, I'd make a pot, and we'd melt some balsam pitch in it—we'd even make a small canoe, for short trips."

They set out for the cleared ravine, where once a great forest fire had swept through. Old Waboosh, the black bear, was there, sunning himself and feeding lazily upon service-berries. He gave them a snort of recognition but went right on, undisturbed.

"Gosh, Pep, I hate to take the life of such a fine creature as he, but we've got to plan it," Dan said as they went on,

headed for a wild-cherry bush. "I need his robe for winter. The skins we have will only last us for clothing. And I've got to kill still another deer for snowshoe webbing."

Dan carried a new spear now. It was shod with a sharp antler tine, and his birch-bark quiver was full of hunting arrows pointed with wolf's incisor teeth. But to attack Waboosh with these weapons alone would be to invite death. A deadfall log trap was the only way, Dan decided. There was plenty of fire-killed timber lying in the clearing. Two long, straight trunks, lying side by side, decided him. They were red pine, a foot thick, but they had been broken off some twenty feet from their roots by crashing down on a giant granite boulder.

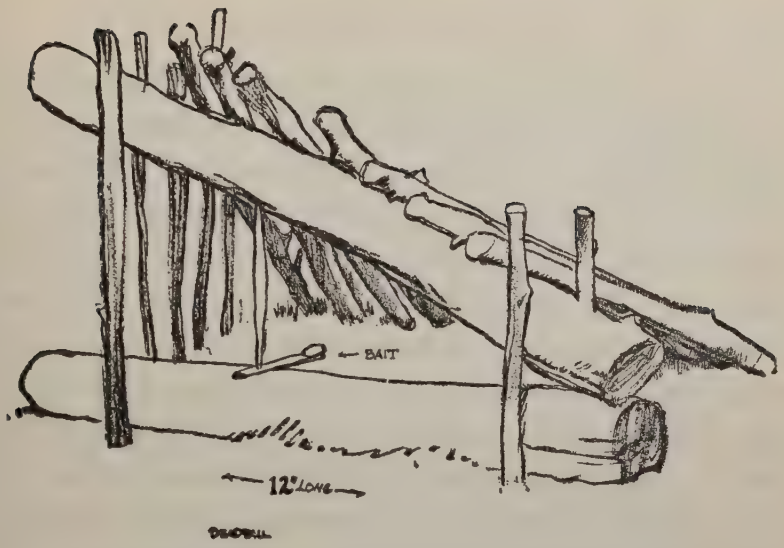
Still thinking, Dan climbed the cherry tree and began stripping berries. When the basket was full he returned to examine the logs. "A Kwakiutl bear trap for him, eh, Pep? We need a maul and a good lever pole to make it."

Full of the idea, he went down to the brook, searching for a suitably shaped stone to make a maul. After picking out a ragged, oblong stone of hard, worn granite, he took a mess of trout from the trap basin and returned to camp. Making a maul without an auger would be a matter of at least two days. It took considerable searching to find a tough, forked, hard maple suitable for a handle, and it took still longer to cut it. A waistband had to be chipped in the stone, with the aid of a hard quartz hammer. Then the stone was lashed into

Making the bear trap

the fork with wet rawhide. Setting it aside to shrink and harden, Dan started making pemmican for his future trip. He spent the rest of the day in pounding the jerked meat to shreds in an improvised stone mortar and reducing the cherries and service-berries to a pulverized mass. The caul-fat from the deer was then cut fine and mixed with the shredded meat and berries. Over the fire Dan suspended a square of thin birch bark, tied by the four corners, where it would get scorching hot yet not burn. Into the shallow bag thus formed, he heaped the compound of pemmican in the making and let the fat dry out to tallow. When the whole mass was well melted, he took it off the fire and set it aside to cool, finally folding up the bark like a skin parfleche and tying it tight with thongs. He then had a store of berry pemmican, such as was universally used by the Plains Indians. There was enough of it to keep him alive for two weeks.

The next day he returned to the berry ravine with a long, green pole, the maul and some stout sinew thongs. These were all he needed to make a bear trap. Building a stone fulcrum in front of the second log, he pried it up with the pole and then tied his end of the lever to a young sapling. Under the log end, so raised, he shoved a big rock and then went back and pried up again on the log, raising it a few inches more. He had but to repeat this process until the log rose at a long slant for some three feet. This and the prone log then made a giant pair of scissor jaws.



Dan searched over the whole field for exactly the pole he wanted for a guidepost. It must be stout and straight, for part of the weight of the log would come on it. A straight shaft of tough red pine four inches thick was finally selected, notched and broken to a six-foot length over a boulder. With this Dan returned to the trap and drove it in with the maul, deep into the soil, upright, near the end of his slanting log, and bearing hard against it. It was further braced from springing by a stout pole, running from a notch cut up near its top to a nearby boulder.

The next thing to make was a trigger and stake. The latter was a short club, just long enough to reach from the trunk of the prone tree to the under side of the slanting one. Its

ends were pointed, and the lower point rested in a shallow cup cut in the thick end of the trigger. On the thin end of the trigger he lashed securely a big hunk of wolf meat for bait. Then, raising the slanting log a few inches more with the lever pole, he jammed the club and trigger in place, with the bait pointing across the prone log. Taking away the lever, he let the slanting log rest supported by the club and trigger alone. He stood and watched it awhile to be sure that the whole thing would not come tumbling down. When satisfied that his guidepost would not give way, Dan began hauling all the small dead poles he could lift and laying them over the slanting log. They came down beyond the prone one in a slant to the ground. When twenty of them were so laid, he had a sort of lean-to built over the bait and its trigger. Then he drove in stout poles at each end of the lean-to, so that there was no other way for the bear to get at the bait except by coming in by the front of the lean-to, and so getting under the slanting log. Waboosh would reach in his head over the prone log, and probably claw at the bait with his paw. As soon as he swung it around, the trigger would slip from under the club and let the log, and all the slanting lean-to poles slanting up over it, come down on him. Thus did the Kwakiutl trap the giant bears of their country.

It was evening when Dan had finished and returned to camp. He was nervous and excited, and he stopped every once in a while to listen through the dead silence of the

wilderness. There were no sounds but the hoot of an owl and the distant wail of a timber wolf, or the occasional bark of a fox. He finally turned in and dozed off to sleep without hearing anything from Waboosh.

Before dawn a distant cry rent the night and awoke him. It was a mixture of bawl and roar—then, silence! Pepper leaped out of the hut, barking madly. Dan caught and quieted him. There was nothing to do now but wait for dawn.

When it was light enough to see, Dan lashed his knife again to a pole. He felt that his buck-tine spear was not dependable enough. Taking his heaviest arrows and his strong bow, he set off with Pepper for the ravine. It was broad daylight when they got there. The trap lay a tumbled heap of ruins. He neared it with beating heart and spear ready in his grip, the bow and his best arrow strung, but there was no need for any of them. A glossy, black mass of fur lay buried under the logs in a shapeless heap—poor old Waboosh was quite dead!

"Bear Person—I'm sorry!" Dan said humbly. He hated traps! They were not fair. He would have loved to tackle old Waboosh with weapons; but the odds had been far too great against him. This hideous deadfall seemed mere treachery. It sickened him; he almost hated to take the fur, badly as he needed it.

"O Great Spirit—forgive!" cried Dan. "This was Thine—but I, a needy one—I had to take him!"

He felt better after that. Something within him told him that it was all right. Nature would soon bring her deadly winds down from the north. If he was to survive he needed that bear's fur for a sleeping bag. He set to work removing the lean-to poles.

Chapter VIII

MOOSWA THE PUGNACIOUS

It took the whole day to skin that bear, and four more to scrape and tan the hide. It seemed to Dan that, no matter how he hurried, Nature went faster. A long spell of sharp weather out of the northwest had set in. Firewood had to be dragged from such distances, now, that the boy thought seriously of moving his camp to a new location. The Indians invariably did.

Wild ducks were winging down from the North in immense flocks. They seemed to come in great flights from a deep bay about three miles to the east. It gave Dan the idea that a wild rice marsh must be up in some backwater there.

"Pep, we've got to investigate this!" Dan told his chum, as he sighted a great cloud of ducks above the head of that bay. "If there's wild rice up there, we're fixed for cereals for the whole winter."

They set out for an exploration trip through the hinterland. Dan carried the birch basket as a packsack. It was loaded with food, and a live coal was buried in a dry puffball fungus. He had also a number of fresh puffballs, for, sliced and fried in bear fat on a flat rock, they made a welcome addition to his menu.

Their way led through dense forest, over the rocky Laurentian hills, each with its ravine and brook pouring into the lake. Dan added another snowshoe hare to the meat stock with his bow. But now he needed the filling nourishment of roots and cereals, of which even the northern forests produce an abundance. He sighed for the acorn oaks of his native Minnesota; it was almost too much to expect a lone pioneer of that family up here!

At length they came out on a wide area of marsh that was lined for miles with the enclosing arms of high granite bluffs. Thousands of acres of impassable muskeg separated him from the course of that sluggish marsh stream that lay looped on the meadow. All along its course waved the tasseled plumes and tall stalks of mile after mile of wild rice, ripe and ready for picking. The rice was unreachable except by swimming. Ducks traded up and down along the slough. The black dots of their bodies covered every reach of it.

"Raft for ours!" declared Dan, surveying all this forest of wealth with calculating eyes. "We must plan for this, old-timer! We need the biggest kind of bark basin, and a pair of

beating sticks. Then we'll come up here and collect a whole mountain of wild rice!"

He looked around once more before turning back. A cry of delight burst from him. Out of a little cove in the bluff facing south rose a great coppery plume of foliage—an oak, if he knew trees!

He raced along the brink towards it. Two deer that were feeding on the acorns hurried off as he approached. A number of squirrels scampered up the trunk. Under the tree they found a tremendous crop of prickly-cupped acorns. It was a bur oak, a straggling specimen of its species which had gotten up here no man could say how, the acorn perhaps gobbled whole by some greedy, wandering bear.

Dan filled the basket with the acorns. They were fat and edible. They meant flour and pancakes galore for him. Then they started back to camp, the boy conning over some way to make a leaching tank. It was there and waiting for him, not half a mile farther along that bluff. Here a young rock elm grew in the open. The sap was pretty well down, but half an hour's work sufficed to cut a square of bark and pry it off. Rossing the rough bark off both ends for some nine inches back, Dan folded the ends into a kind of boat. He went on, now provided with the best bowl of all his supply.

Arrived at camp, Dan spent all the rest of the day getting ready for flour making. First, the acorns had to be dried over the fire and then husked. After that the kernels were ground

in a stone mortar, which was nothing more nor less than a convenient hollow in the granite outcroppings by the beach. After putting the flour in the elm bowl, he filled it with water and stirred, with frequent changings, until the water no longer came yellow-tinged nor bitter. Pouring the last of it off, he had a batter; that evening saw the flat frying-stone busy with many a paper-thin pancake of acorn flour. Dan and Pepper devoured them as fast as they were done!

Next morning he set about making the raft. Hunting along the beach, he finally decided on a great, prone spruce trunk, straight and bleached from seasons of weathering. It had to be cut with fire in two places, near the swell of the roots, and again fourteen feet farther along toward the small end. Armed with the bowl of water and a bark ladle, he spent the hours keeping two fires going and a ribbon of water trickling down around the trunk on both sides of each fire, so as to confine its burning to one spot on the log.

While this slow charring process was going on, Dan spent the time making a set of gluts, hard chisels, from the upper leg bones of the deer, for splitting the trunk in half. It was evening before the last of the trunk-end had charred through. Dan rolled the trunk over out of the way and put out the two fires. Then, driving with a hard stone, he started the first glut in near the center of the top of the small end of the trunk. A narrow split showed up, for perhaps a foot down the trunk. Into this a second glut was driven, and then a third, follow-

ing the crack down from end to end. A second glut was then driven into the little end, below the first, and then all of them were pounded, each a little in turn. It was not long before dull cracks in the interior told him that the whole log was splitting. Dan redoubled his efforts. With a rending of fibers the trunk fell in halves—two light floats for a raft catamaran.

Dan went to bed, impatient for morning. After breakfast he cut two saplings, with forks at the upper ends, and made a number of sharp, stout hardwood pins. He was then ready to start the raft. Launching the two half-logs, he floated them around in front of camp and then drove in a stout pin about two feet from each end in the center of their flats. Two long tamarack poles were next crossed to form diagonal braces, and lashed fast to the pins with rawhide, the two logs floating side by side during the process. It was cold work. He was glad to be able to hop up on the raft and make a platform on it by lashing short sticks across the braces. Above these were tied two more long poles for gunwales, and then the two stout forks were cut and lashed upside down to the gunwales, with their feet driven into deep clefts in the flat of the trunks. Their handles, sticking up a foot, made strong tholepins on which to tie the oars. Next the oars were made by splitting a three-inch straight spruce pole. Dan lashed them loosely to their pins.

The raft was now finished. It would carry him and Pepper easily. But, as they were going on a wild-rice expedition, some sort of basin was needed. This Dan made next. Driving

in four stakes up near the bow he tied short sticks across their tops. A wide sheet of birch bark was then hung in between the sticks. The flat *U*'s of their ends were closed in with slabs of bark cut to that shape and stitched with watap.

By the time this was done, it was too late to visit the marsh, so Dan decided to try out his raft on a fishing trip. He made a new lure this time, an artificial one. A short stick of balsam was split at one end and a sharp needle of bone lashed in. Then the stick was dyed red by dipping in a bowl of crushed squawberry. With this lure tied to the end of his line, Dan set out for the lily-pad cove. It was evening as the raft moved slowly over the still waters. A multitude of migrating swallows were dipping and swooping over the lake. A hungry pike leaped for one from his lair in a dent in the pads near shore. The water swirled in wide circles where he lay, still smarting with rage over his miss, for the agile swallow had been too quick for him. Dan cast his lure there, and jerked it artfully across the widening circle of ripples. The pike took it with a furious smash. Pepper barked and carried on as the battle raged. Dan grinned with grim pleasure as he swung the raft out. He had this fellow just where he wanted him, out in deep water, where he had no snag, no lily roots to snub the line around. A few big circles, a few valiant leaps—there would be pike steak in camp that night! A cow moose, feeding up to her ears in the backwater, had watched the whole fight unconcernedly. Dan watched her as she flapped her big ears and

shook off the flies while he rowed slowly back. It was a familiar sight, even the big bulls had been coming down lately to rid themselves of deer flies. But it was now the mating season and they were generally back in the hills.

It was a grand, hazy morning, almost the end of Indian Summer when Dan started for the rice fields. All Nature was busy. His forest neighbors, from the beavers back in the swamp to the saucy red squirrels around camp, were at work storing their granaries against the coming winter. Dan rowed his raft lazily, singing a low, happy chant to the Great Spirit as he swept along. In his loneliness, his longing for a friend had seized on Him as the nearest being to himself in all these miles of wilderness. He was in everything, wherever Dan's eyes rested. Above all, He was in the boy himself, the one dependable Rock around which all his genuine and finer qualities could rally. His courage, his faith in himself, his self-reliance, his fortitude, all these flowed from the Great Spirit as from an unceasing spring. With them planted like a fort within him, Dan could defy anything; without them he was as good as dead. They were the surest things he had yet found in this life; far more real and important than the tangible raw materials with which he worked.

That vast brotherhood of animals, fishes, plants and trees all about him had been an absorbing study. Most of them, except a few bloodthirsty outlaws of the Weasel People, had but one law under which they lived—to take no more of the

forest's wealth than they needed to keep alive. Dan respected that law, too. He could have killed a vastly greater number of animals than he did. The forest lanes of the northern hare often disclosed a member of that tribe squatting in plain sight before him, but no arrow was drawn on him. The deer trails were full of the soft footsteps of doe and fawn; the blood of none of them lay on his hands. Once he and Pepper had come upon a drove of woodland caribou, cows and young, and one guardian bull. He watched them curiously from his concealment, and saw the cows teaching their young to leap over down-trees, which is against their normal Barren-Ground instincts. Dan had let them pass, though it had given him an idea. Those narrow, sharp, palmate brow horns would make the best kind of a bone tomahawk. He kept his eye open for a pair of cast antlers.

Otherwise the animals, each and all, lived the law of their own lives according to their instincts. They cared not a whit whether Dan approved or disapproved, but went their ways unmindful of his criticism. Most of them were content to live and let live. Even Waboosh seldom killed. Dan was glad when a new bear moved in at the berry ravine, where his deadfall trap had been sprung. The woods seemed incomplete without funny old Waboosh filling his stomach in some berry patch. He and Pepper soon got on good terms with this new member of the black bears. Each went his own way with only an occasional look to see that no harm was intended.

An hour more of rowing brought the low shore line of the marsh in sight. It was backed by a dark green sky line of wooded bluffs that inclosed it. Dan rowed steadily, singing with joy:

Father, we thank Thee:
We have found good hunting.
There is meat in the wigwam.

The song felt good in the mouth, and in the heart. Dan sang it over and over again, in the liquid words of the Arapaho. Then a swish of grasses sounded scraping along the logs of the raft. He had entered a huge field of bur grass. The tall stalks rose through shallow water for half a mile out. Standing up, he picked out the spot where the grass was thinnest and headed toward it, for it would lead him to the channel of the creek. After a time the open places began to twist and turn and the water grew deeper. He was deep in the bur grass, now, approaching the shores of the marsh. Waving plumes of wild rice beckoned him on. Overhead the wild ducks winnowed. A long *V* of Canada geese soared over the sky line like a black wisp. The marsh was alive with wild life as he entered it. Red-wing blackbirds filled the air with their liquid *O-cal-eee;* marsh wrens trilled from perches deep in the rice; ducks splashed up off the water at every bend. Dan rowed the raft to the bank and began hauling himself along by grasping great handfuls of wild-rice stalks. Each bundle of plumes was

held over the birch basin and beaten with a rod until its heavy load of grains fell. In two hours of this steady progress the bin was full to the brim with the little hairy husks.

Then a tiny side creek invited him. Dan pulled the raft in there until its stern was hidden by the mud banks on each side. Bending down the rice stalks, and planting new ones with their clods of mud anchoring them to the bottom, he soon had the raft completely hidden.

He lay waiting, his quiver of light spruce arrows lying on the platform. His bow was strung and ready. For a time there was no visitor, save a cheerful little marsh wren who perched on a stalk not a yard away and lifted up his voice in a soft trill. Then ripples outside told him that something was coming. Presently a hen and drake mallard passed, swimming slowly.

TWANG! went the bow, and TWANG! again, before the second duck could rise off the water. The two lay floating, the white arrows piercing through them. At a word from Dan, Pepper sprang in and soon came swimming back with the first duck in his jaws. Dan boated it and sent him after the other. Half an hour later a lone drake offered another mark, and in an hour more there were six on the raft.

"Enough, Pep! We'll go ashore and have lunch," said Dan as the dog swam back with the last one and shook himself on the raft, the cold drops flying all about. Dan took his fire sticks and a duck and leaped for the bank. Inside the fringe

of the rice, a vast brown field of marsh grass stretched. It was warm and dry here. The packed-down grass kept the mud at bay. Dan found some dry branches left by spring floods and started a fire. He had the bow-and-drill apparatus now, a stone socket having a shallow hole drilled in it. In the fire bag were shredded cedar and some curls of birch bark. It was not a minute before flames were flickering in the pile of wood. Dan cleaned the duck and then plastered it well with mud and buried it under the fire. Up the creek a short distance was a dense clump of arrow-leaved water lilies. Into it he waded, loosening the tuberous roots with his feet. They floated to the top of the muddy water. He gathered a lot of these and boiled them with the stones brought along in his elm-bark bowl. By the time they were soft, the duck was roasted. Dan broke off its hard-baked mud covering, and the skin and feathers came with it, leaving the juicy meat ready to eat.

All afternoon Dan worked in that marsh, for it held untold stores of food. He filled the bark basket with arrow-lily tubers, and then went searching for a pond full of the great bulrush. Its roots would make excellent flour when dried and pounded, and its long flat leaves were meant for weaving mats. The water Nelumbo was not hard to find, and both the nuts and roots made splendid foods. Dan's raft could hardly float when it finally made its way downstream, almost submerged by its load of marsh plunder.

It was sunset when Dan landed his stores at camp. He was still full of energy and had planned a long stay in camp, with time to prepare all his food for storage. He and Pepper set out for the cove to dig a fresh supply of yellow-lily roots. The long northern twilight had set in and there was a nip in the air that warned him that very soon the ice would come and there would be no more gathering. The water was cold when he dropped into it up to his chest and began treading around in the soft mud for the thick lily roots.

Then, from far back in the hills came a cry, long-drawn and indescribably longing, ending in a sort of grunt. Dan listened. In a spirit of boyish mischief, he cupped his hands and answered the call of that bull moose. It would be accepted as a challenge. Dan went on carelessly digging roots and throwing each broken length up on the raft.

After a time—knock, knock, knock!—antlers were striking against dry wood up on the hillside. Dan listened, holding a dripping root in his hands. That drip was the last sound needed to awaken the bull's fury. There came an angry, challenging whistle, and then the rush and crackle of underbrush. The balsams and spruces waved, agitated by the passage of some huge animal. In a few seconds the moose burst out of a thicket, snorting through distended nostrils, his eyes blazing defiance. He looked around with an expression which said as plainly as words: "You said something about a fight? Well, here I am!"

The Big and Angry People

"Gosh, he means business!" muttered Dan. He jumped aboard the raft, while Pepper barked incessantly.

The moose squealed wickedly, lashed his great palmated horns from side to side and pawed the ground with his long front legs. He was full of fight! A green fire burned in his eyes as he lowered his head and prepared to charge.

Dan jumped to his seat and pulled hard on the oars. The raft began to retreat, sluggishly. Taking that as a signal, the moose dashed into the water and splashed toward them in immense leaps. Dan pulled with all his might. His weapons would be useless against this thick-headed and thick-hided animal! The inertia of the logs was great and the raft made slow progress. The moose overtook them, his great forelegs kicked ahead out of the water at every stride. Then, with a bellow of rage, he rose high above them on his hind legs. Dan got one glimpse of immense antlers that were as wide as he was tall towering threateningly above him, of great hoofs stabbing at him, of Pepper leaping overboard with a whine of terror under the shaggy belly of the moose—and then he dived deep, holding his breath for the longest fetch he ever hoped to have to make in his whole life.

Dan swam doggedly under water, holding his breath to the limit of endurance. When he finally came up it was in deep water, fully fifteen yards from the raft. The moose was snorting and squealing and venting his rage on the raft; one of his huge feet had plunged through its platform. At sight of

Dan he trumpeted his fighting call and tried to dash after him, but the raft was not so easily gotten rid of as that. Its tough tamarack poles had caught and held the big hoof. A cry of delight escaped Dan as he swam away on his side, watching the infuriated animal tugging at his imprisoned foot. When it finally came free the moose rose high out of the water and his antlers cracked down on the raft like a thunderbolt. He pawed it with his front hoofs and butted it until it was strewn over the waters, a mass of sticks, its two logs still held by the rawhide thongs.

Dan headed for shore in a swift crawl stroke. What the moose would do next he could not guess, but he wanted his weapons and wanted them at once. Hurriedly he lashed his hunting knife to a long pole and got out his heaviest arrows. High in a near-by tree he put them and the war bow; up that tree was his last refuge in case the moose should take it into his head to come on across the cove into camp. Then he called in Pepper and tied him up. The dog was likely to invite that very invasion.

For a time Dan watched the old fellow still standing in the lake, surrounded by floating raft wreckage and the lily roots, which he was greedily devouring. Dan had nearly gotten a chill while gathering those roots. If ever he felt like getting back at the children of the wild, it was then! But he did not dare attack. Luckily a light breeze was blowing from the northwest, so the scent did not carry to where the lord of the

hills stood. Shaking with cold and anxiety, Dan watched the moose from his hiding place among the trees. Never before had he felt homeless in the woods. He could always rig up a shelter of some sort and call it home, even though it was a mere pocket in a gully bank. Now his hut would be just a wreck of sticks and poles and birch bark if that big, stupid animal scented him and came splashing over to wreak his irritation on Dan and everything that he owned. The Big and Angry People, the Indians called the grizzly bear and the moose. This moose had never been taught fear of man by the whip of a hunting rifle. In a flash Dan understood the cave shelter used by the Iroquois when they were out of their strong stockades and the ladder of the cliff dwellers of the Southwest. One man alone, with the best of primitive weapons, was no match for the Big and Angry People. His home also had to be fortified against them.

With relief, he finally heard the fretful and impatient call of a cow moose somewhere back in the hills. Sir Bull pricked up his ears and waded out. He vanished up the deer trail where Dan had shot the buck. Thankful that his home was saved, the youth turned back to release Pepper.

Chapter IX

WOLVERINE PERSON

He found Pepper straining at his leash in the direction of the hut and sniffing and growling. Dan did not untie him. He went to the hut with spear poised and an uneasy foreboding in his heart. There was an old white man's saying that your troubles did not arrive singly, they came in threes. Dan had laughed at it, but there was a peculiar foul odor in the air that he could not place. There was no sign with which he was familiar that would indicate the cause of the stench.

The hut reeked of it as he looked inside. His skins were torn and disheveled instead of neatly folded on the browse bed. A great hole in the rear of the roof showed a broad section of the sky.

Dan jumped around to his food cache. It was on a platform that he had built back of camp to protect his stores from

small rodents. There ruin met his eyes. The pemmican parfleche was torn to bits; part of its contents devoured, the rest wantonly befouled. His basket of wild-rice ears had been ripped to shreds and the grains so scattered over the leaves that only a mere pinch could be picked up here and there. His acorns lay all over the ground; the lily roots were partly eaten and the rest defiled. Dan examined the claw marks.

"Wolverine Person!" he said. "It's all to do over again!"

This was serious. That diabolical creature was regarded by the Indians with mixed hate and respect. No trap, native or white man's, that they could devise but Wolverine Person robbed it. No food cache was proof against him. What he could not gorge he ruined and defiled, and then tore up the rest in pure malice. One of these rare great weasels had evidently discovered Dan's lair. It had happened that afternoon, after they had landed their stores and were out in the cove gathering lily roots.

Worst of all, the wolverine must have carried off Dan's calendar stick. It was nowhere around. He knew that they had been known to carry a gun two miles into the forest before abandoning it, the stock ruined. The wolverine seemed to know by intuitive cunning, or perhaps observation, what the man who owned the camp valued most. It was probably that white stick, decorated with rows of notches, that had attracted this fellow's eye as something to carry off as a parting insult.

Dan went into the hut to see what damage had been done there. His bearskin robe had been deliberately ripped in long gashes by those terrible claws. The four wolfskins were chewed and mangled. All were defiled, but they could be washed and sewed up. Dan felt pretty grim. He was not afraid of the wolverine, though they had been known to attack and kill a medium-sized black bear. He was afraid for Pepper. The dog would simply have no chance against those raking claws. With them the wolverine could tear open a beaver hut—except that the Beaver People were too canny for him. When winter came they mixed snow slush with the outer hut sticks, and then built a second and a third covering in like manner over their summer roof. Thus only could they be sure against Wolverine Person when the dead of winter made him hungry.

Having found Dan's camp the wolverine would surely come back. He would not stop, if they were there, but would attack with his formidable strength and quickness. Dan hoped that he would! He would tie Pepper inside the hut, then, and defend him with bow and spear and war club. The wolverine's brown and yellow fur was the warmest known to the North.

He untied Pepper and set about cleaning up the wreckage. The foul and persistent odor had to be endured. Washing the furs helped some; but it aroused in Dan a bitter hate and resentment. He sewed all evening by the firelight. The loss of

his calendar could be made good, he reflected. The time was September; the trees told him that. One thing that he very definitely remembered about Lac Seul was that it was a little more than fifty degrees north. That big parallel of latitude had run through Lake Minnitaki about where his last camp was before making the Junction. His present camp was about forty miles due north of that parallel, say forty minutes of latitude. As the autumnal equinox was due on September twenty-first, he did not have to bother about the sun's declination to get a fresh date for his calendar. He had but to set up a stake and measure the angle of the sun by its shadow. If it came out about fifty degrees, his date would be close to September twenty-first. The sun's declination would be zero on that date, and all latitudes would agree with the shadow cast by the sun.

The date was important. Already he was five weeks overdue at Factory Saint Joseph, Osnaburgh House. His father would begin to worry when the days went by and no word came from there about him. Dan had hoped, long before this, to encounter some wandering Indians by whom a message could be sent in the Cree syllable-writing on a piece of birch bark. The script had been invented by a missionary named Evans; it was universally used all over the North, and Dan himself had learned it in two hours' study. But the Indians had been away on their long trips to Fort Albany and down the Nipigon. He might expect some back by now. That mes-

sage to his father would go by the first runner he could induce to take it, Dan resolved. So far as he could see, he could not move from here for a month yet; then he would continue on to Saint Joseph.

He wondered what his third calamity was to be as he turned in at length, with the sleeping bag sewed up. Before he had dozed off he knew. A distant rumble sounded. Dan rubbed his ears. He could not possibly hear a train forty miles away on the Canadian Pacific; never had there been the slightest whisper of it, no matter how silent the night. This rumble was somehow fierce and harsh. It seemed punctuated with faint explosive poppings and cracklings. Also it was coming nearer, steadily. . . .

Dan got an elbow out of his bag and cupped an ear to listen. The lake was beginning to talk. Its usual waves lapping the granite sounded agitated and violent. The rumble grew louder and louder till it sounded like a veritable express train thundering down upon them. The poppings became distinct and were accompanied by crashes that suggested the fall of trees. A harsh and angry babble of waters was advancing from down the lake. The babble grew to a roar, then trees went down in every direction across the cove, and the rumble became the mighty shout of a tempest. The onset of that northeast gale swept over Dan's campsite in a fury of wind that tore and scattered everything movable outside.

There was a terrifying ferocity in it that made him get up and dress hurriedly. Cutting a slit in the middle of one wolfskin to make a poncho, Dan tied it about his waist with the fur side in. Trees were crashing down all around them in a din of breaking branches and snapping poles. Dan thanked his stars that he had seen to it that no big dead one was near by. As it was, he would have to fight for his roof.

The wind was ripping and tearing at its birch-bark slabs as he stumbled outside. It was bitter cold. A shower of spray smote him from the lake. Dan took one look at the broad white tongue of water rolling far up on his granite ledge, and receding with all sorts of forest litter on it, and knew that soon he would be drowned out. Lac Seul had a tall, stern surf on it now, under the lash of this gale. It smote the granite shore with the shock of a battering-ram. A wave came up and up, reaching like a deadly tongue for his hut. The next one, or the next, would reach it and carry off everything he owned, furs, weapons, house, food.

Dan made up his mind instantly. "Out of this, Pepper!" he shouted above the roaring wind. "High ground! Everything we can carry!"

He grabbed his weapons and dived into the hut. Fire sticks, tools, small possessions of all sorts he stuffed with his bow and arrows and club into the sleeping bag, and after them a long roll of the wolfskins. While he was at it, a trickle of water came in over the floor and he heard the fire sizzling

He watched the waves lap up the last of his hut

and steaming outside. Dan dashed out and snatched up a hot coal just in time. He babied it from hand to hand and dropped it on the hut floor. It was dark as a pocket in there now, but by the glow of that coal he found a dry fungus, jabbed it with his knife, and thrust the coal down into it.

"Out, Pep!"

Shouldering his bundle, Dan jumped a puddle outside and turned uphill. The pemmican bag at the food cache had been blown up against the bank and pinned there by the wind that was nearly knocking him down. It was foul and covered with tiny green needles from the ground pine that held it; but it was food and would have to do. Dan wrapped the remains of it around his puffball and started on. At the top of the low rise of ground that gave on a gully behind, he turned and looked back at his hut. The whole fore-shore of it was now awash in a tumbling surf. White tongues lapped unceasingly up into the forest and swirled around the threshold of his hut.

"Might save some birch bark from it Pep," Dan said plaintively. "No; there goes a piece now."

The wind had ripped off a square and sent it whirling through the trees. He felt cold and miserable; but not homeless. So long as they had the fur bag there would be a nest. But this wolfskin poncho was not enough; his legs shivered and shook. He would make leggings and a breechcloth as his next job, he resolved. The bathing trunks were full of holes

and would have to be saved as an undergarment for the bitter cold weather.

They found a hollow under the spruces in the gully. It was blown solidly full of leaves and needles by the wind. Dan scooped down into it and spread out his sleeping bag. His possessions were set in order outside and the puffball buried deep in the duff. It would keep there for hours. Dan crept into his bag and arranged a lair for Pepper with a wolfskin over him. The warmth slowly returned to his chilled body. Luckily it was not raining. A "dry nor'easter" the old settlers called these autumnal storms that ushered in the winter.

He soon felt drowsy and comfortable. There was a nagging to get up and see what could be done about saving the hut roof, but Dan put it aside.

"Oh, the deuce with it!" he thought. "I've had enough for one day! Riches to poverty, all in a few hours."

A light snowfall covered everything when he poked his head out of the bag next morning. It was still blowing hard, and he heard the voice of the lake in one unceasing roar. Lac Seul—Lonely Lake! It was well named! No Indians lived near its shores. It was too big and too violent. It drowned anyone who tried to cross it, and if you camped on its bank you got flooded out. In summer, when it was habitable, the Indians were all away. In winter. . . . Dan reached into the red man's mind to study out what they did then. They set up their wigwams on its tributaries, he reasoned. There was

grand fur and wild-rice country all about it. Every stream and backwater was full of beaver. Dan recalled vaguely a stream flowing in from an unnamed lake to the north of it. There was another just south of him, a stream about twenty miles long with a pond at the head of it. In such places the Indians would be most likely to set up their fur camps.

"We move, Pep, as soon as this is over," Dan announced as Pepper came yawning out from under his wolfskin.

The youth pulled the pemmican toward him from under the snow and began slicing off its fouled exterior. Pepper gobbled the pieces up greedily. He had no compunctions! Dan chewed on a rank bit.

"We'll settle our score with Brother Wolverine for this!" he said grimly. "He'll follow our scent, of course, but not now. Even the animals know enough to den up in a storm."

He snuggled back into the sleeping bag after he had eaten what he could of the noisome pemmican. Everything was, as he had said, all to make over again; but the thing to do now was to "bottle up sleep," as the Indians called it. Dan slept clear around the clock, and on the morning of the second day was awakened by an unusual heat. It was cold and the storm was more or less over outside. The thing that was causing that heat was the forest duff under him. The puffball had burned clear through to its skin and had set the duff afire.

He roused gaily. "Come on, Pep!" he cried. "Here's fire and nothing to cook on it! But this is fine tracking snow!"

His bows and arrows and fire sticks had slept with him, along one side of the bag. They were warm and dry. Pepper and Dan went out to bag a snowshoe hare as their first activity.

The woods people were already up and about. Delicate tracery of deer-mice tracks; the four prints of rabbit and squirrel; the straight line of holes made by the fox; the long trace of the snowshoe hare's foot—all were written in the snow. Pepper soon dashed out on the chase of a fresh hare track. Dan waited till the hare circled back and then drove an arrow through him. The hare's fur was already spotted with white. By winter he would have been all white and invisible against a snowbank.

They could not go very far away from the sleeping bag with Wolverine Person still haunting the neighborhood. Because of him Dan had decided on a move back to the pond. His peace of mind was utterly destroyed by the marauder. Nothing that he owned was safe now.

He could carry his few remaining possessions back through the woods to the stream, but to reach the pond he had to go up it some twenty miles by water. Dan circled over to the lake with some idea of rebuilding his raft. They reached the lily-pad cove. The raft logs had been cast high on the rocks; the cove shore was a frozen mass of lily-pad wreckage. Dan gathered a store of seeds from their pods. They would give him flour enough for his immediate needs. He shook his head

after one glance at those logs and the lake. It was sullen and violent under a windy, gray sky.

"She'd never live for the row back to the stream's mouth, Pep," he said. "Come all apart in the first mile. Now, where was that elm tree?"

He had often looked at it when Lac Seul had been comparatively quiet. There had been temptation to make an Iroquois elm-bark canoe from it and attempt crossing the treacherous lake. It grew straight, but was such a very small tree, not over a foot in diameter. It had a possible twelve feet between its base and the first important branch. Dan finally spied it, growing in the deer trail thicket and now stripped of all leaves. It would give him a small canoe, not over twenty-two inches wide and about twelve feet long. He could not think of crossing wide water on it, but it would do for the stream.

They kept on around the cove to see what was left of the hut. Not a vestige of it remained but its stone chimney. The lake had carried it off bodily. Still, a chimney was a hearth; it would be better to rebuild here roughly for their remaining stay, Dan figured.

The food cache, having been built higher than the wolves could reach, was not washed away, and around it were many fresh tracks of the wolverine. This time he had torn the cache's pole platform all apart and had then pawed industriously for Dan's acorns. There were greedy mouth marks in

the snow where he had licked them up. Anxiously Dan looked uphill for more of his tracks. He could scent that befouled pemmican for miles and follow it right up. It was only the north wind that had saved them from a second pillage, Dan realized. The wolverine's tracks went on along the lake bank.

"He's altogether too vicious and wanton for me, Pepper!" Dan growled exasperatedly. "Suppose he comes back to the south of us? We'd better get back to the sleeping bag, right now!"

They found their lair unmolested. But that diabolical animal would have to be settled with very soon. Dan felt as if he were living in a neighborhood infested by burglars. He reasoned that the wolverine would keep on along the lake bank till he came to the inflowing pond stream. He would then follow up its bank, looking for some incautious beaver for prey. As the stream ran roughly parallel to the lake and but a few miles inland, the wolverine would soon encounter the enticing scent of pemmican.

"We'll make it hard for him, Pep," Dan said with cold fury. He had decided on battle. To give himself all the advantage possible, he carried their pemmican some distance up the gully from the smoldering fire and tied it up in a bare, dead balsam. Everything else of value went into the sleeping bag. Its long roll was lashed up in the branches of a vigorous spruce near the fire. The wolverine would have to climb one of those trees to reach his bait. It would give Dan a chance to get in one arrow, or possibly two, before the crea-

ture could spring down and come at him. He relied on his war club more than the spear for the big fight. There would be no antlers to ward off its deadly granite blade this time!

Pepper would have to be out of it. Dan tied him by a thong to a sapling near the pemmican bait. He could snap it with his teeth if attacked, but it was strong enough to keep him out of the fight for a time—which Dan hoped would be brief.

They had not long to wait after these preparations were made. It was about the middle of the afternoon when Pepper rose growling and straining at his leash, his nose pointing south. The bristles rose on his neck, his teeth clicked and his snarls were bitter and continuous. The dog sensed something savage and fearsome in this new scent.

Dan peered through the dense timber and finally spied the wolverine. It was coming low over the snow, straight for the pemmican tree. Dan was surprised at its size. He judged that it was all of five feet long, from its sharp snout to the end of its bushy tail. It looked like a small brown and yellow bear as it came straight on, paying no attention to Pepper's mad barks.

Dan remained out of sight, watching. The wolverine came to the foot of the tree, and sniffed awhile at the man-scent around it. He bared his teeth at Pepper, as if to say: "My meat, dog! I'll attend to you, presently!" His long claws hooked over the twigs and he went agilely up the tree. Now!

Dan drew his heavy ash arrow to the head and let drive. Thunk! It buried deep in the wolverine's broad back. With a

guttural snarl the wolverine turned his head to snap savagely at the shaft. At the same time he spied Dan in the act of drawing his second arrow. In one bound he was out of the tree, and Dan missed him as he fell. He grasped his war club in his right hand and spear in the left and braced his feet to meet the most appalling attack he had ever been called upon to withstand. Low over the snow the wolverine came swiftly on. The most frightfully malicious snarl to be seen on any animal wrinkled in fold on fold over his sharp teeth. It struck terror to the heart of most living creatures and caused a mad urge to turn and run. Dan conquered the spasm of fright and swung his club—*Smash!*

The wolverine warded it off with a deft, lightning-swift sweep of his claws and sprang in a heavy leap for Dan. The youth jumped back, letting his spear point rise and its shaft slant back to earth. The knife sank in to the hilt. The wolverine fell over sideways with a gasping snarl, impaled by the spear and stopped short by its shaft. Dan rained down blow after blow, striving to break his backbone. The wolverine squirmed free of the blade and fought madly on his back with terrible lashing claws. Dan jumped out of danger. His antagonist was dying, but he would fight on to the last ounce of his strength. The wolverine seized this respite to roll up on his feet and attack again, his eyes murderous upon Dan, his wrinkled snout as malicious as ever.

Dan struck at him with the club—and it was just at this

instant that Pepper got free and came charging into the fight. That wouldn't do! Dan booted him off and aimed a hard blow with his club—*Crack!* The granite tooth came down swift and sure on the wolverine's skull, smashing him to earth. He lay kicking and struggling, deprived at last of his wits.

Dan stood panting and looking down at his prize. It was that white cowl, like a death mask across the broad, bearlike snout, that made the wolverine's snarl so wicked. He was not a bear, but the largest of the Weasel and Mink People. He had all the bloodthirsty ferocity of that tribe. Dan did not apologize this time; instead he whooped a war dance—

Makugun, you are conquered!
Makugun, you are conquered!

He sang it over and over again. What a relief! His forest was home once more—no haunting fear of everything he owned being eaten and destroyed! Dan longed for an Indian drum, with its deep, echoing note; but all he could do was snap his fingers joyfully as he danced the Arapaho victory dance.

"A drum I shall have—take time to make one," Dan said. "Something in me needs it!"

He unlashed his knife from the spear shaft. That act of peace spoke plainly of their return to plenty and freedom of mind again. He started methodically to skin the wolverine. Its fur would make him the warmest of jackets.

Chapter X

CREE NEIGHBORS

Dan rebuilt the hut and shingled it with balsam browse. A spell of sharp, sunny weather with a northwest wind followed the storm. Thin ice formed on the cove backwaters. Lac Seul was covered with brisk whitecaps and was impossible for the raft, even if he should reassemble it. Dan, therefore, built a ladder and went on with his canoe. Cutting two notched rings around the elm bark about twelve feet apart, and joining them with a long vertical slit, he rossed off the bark with his bone chisels and a spud pole. This canoe simply needed its ends sewed up with rawhide lacing and then its gunwales spread open by three flat pine braces that made it take canoe shape. He scraped off the rough outer bark to lighten it and turned the canoe upside down in the sun to dry out.

How to make pitch for it was quite a problem. It was easy to collect spruce and balsam resin, and there was some fat on

the wolverine carcass to bubble it with, but no birch-bark box would do. It took fire over the coals as soon as he tried it. The pitch would not pass heat quickly enough.

"Come on, Pepper, we'll have to find clay," Dan said when that experiment had lost him his first store of resin in flames. He was eager to be gone. He needed a fresh store of wild rice and acorn flour before thinking of pushing on for Factory Saint Joseph. That big slough up the lake had all its wild-rice stalks blown flat, he was sure. Nature had given her children all the grains they would be allowed to have. The rest was for seed. The great gale was her way of providing for it. But that little pond in the interior was protected by the hills. Its wild-rice plumes would still be waving.

They set off for the trout pool. Dan speared a dozen of the speckled beauties for food and then searched up and down the brook bed till he found an outcropping of clay. He pried great sticky chunks of it out of the icy water and then made a parfleche of birch bark to carry it in. Back at camp he kneaded it into a long rope and then coiled the rope on itself, gradually raising the sticky turns till he had a deep, round bowl. It dried swiftly on the fire and was ready for pitch. While the resin and fat were melting together, he stood the canoe up on end and got ready a birch-bark ladle. With it the hot pitch was poured into the bow and stern cracks till they were sealed.

"There, Pep! We move immediately," Dan said, surveying

his handiwork with satisfaction. He had cached his paddle in a tree long ago, and it was still there. Pensively the youth unlashed its piece of cord, memories crowding in on him. It seemed a year since that shipwreck! His wits and knowledge of Indian woodcraft had served him well since that day of destitution and homelessnes! He had been here a busy month and a half, he guessed. Just what the present date was would have to wait for a shadow stick. There was no time for it now.

He lashed his weapons and the paddle to the canoe thwarts, cut a rest stick, and tied in the wolverine skin and a parfleche of trout and pemmican made of one of the wolf skins. Together with the canoe they made a load of about eighty pounds. Dan had no illusions about portaging through the trackless forest. They might be all the rest of the day at it!

It was sunset by the time the swamps of that stream came in sight. A placid beaver backwater it was, with domed huts here and there in the expanse of the slang. The brown marsh grass was all gold in the setting sun. The gaunt, dead trees were lavender and gold, interspersed with yellow birch plumes and green spruces. Dan loved it at sight. Here his Indian friends would settle for the winter, to trap for their livelihood. It was peaceful and sheltered in this valley. He hoped that a clan of the Swamp Crees would make the pond their headquarters.

"Isn't it beautiful, Pep?" Dan wearily set the canoe down for the last time, and sat and studied the scene. To many it

would be mere desolation; to him it was entrancing. That marsh grass was abundance for building a warm wigwam. The ravine teemed with wild life, and the pond would offer generous stores of Nature's cereals and smoked fish. He could stay here forever, were it not for the anxiety it would cause his father. That message to him would have to be attended to as soon as possible.

The pond was about fifteen miles upstream from here, he judged. He itched to launch the canoe and explore, but the fading light warned him that the gnats would soon be out.

"We camp for the night, Pepper," Dan said and got out his fire sticks. A shelf of great boulders gave on the marsh here. A gnarled and tufted gray pine made a canopy over them. He selected a needly hollow between two boulders for their bed and cleared it of sticks and branches. Over the small fire on a rock their trout were broiled, and then Dan made a thick smudge against the gnats. With a wolf skin under them and the wolverine robe as a covering, he took Pepper into his arms and they snuggled down for the night.

It grew bitter cold. The canopy of pine tufts was scant protection against the cold of space on a starlit night, and a thin sheet of ice covered the backwater next morning. Dan had been glad of Pepper's warmth. That ice warned him that the race against King Frost would be a stern one. His canoe would be useless in a few days more. He had yet to make the trip up to the pond.

"Up and at 'em, Pep!" Dan cried, shaking out the wolverine robe. "We'll have pemmican for breakfast as we go!"

He found a dead pole and laid it against the trunk of a tall yellow birch. Up it he shinned with the fur bundle and tied it to the first stout branch; then he slid down and took the pole away.

"Take more than porky to reach *that* cache!" he said gaily.

They set off north through the forest for Lac Seul. It had been hard going with that canoe! Rooty and tangled pushing through the thickets of spruce, with many detours when the way became impassable; sparse growths but rocky stumblings on the heights of land; game trails that helped somewhat in the ravines. Dan fed Pepper hunks of pemmican as they tripped along. He chewed at the tough slices himself. In a little over an hour they had arrived back at the lake.

It was as windy as ever. Dan rolled his fur bag into a huge pack containing all his bowls and utensils, put the tump-strap across his forehead and shook his fist at the lake.

"Good-by, Lac Seul!" he said. "I won't see you again till you're frozen over solid!"

During the trip back, he planned out his race against King Frost. He would need snowshoes and a toboggan to travel. Another buck would have to be shot for babiche webbing for the snowshoes. Tough tamarack could give him their frames, but the toboggan required an ash. It was hard and split easily. Two young black-ash saplings would furnish

the long four-inch strips. How to get them down without an ax, that was the question. Dan tossed it off light-heartedly. He would have to go to flint-making anyhow. He knew all about it.

It was noon and they were hungry when they got back to the canoe again. Dan cut a new fish pole and tied his line and lure to it, to snake a pike out of that backwater. He had hardly made the first cast from the marsh bank before one took hold. They were ravenous, with winter coming on and all the minnows down deep in the mud!

He and Pepper ate the steaks and then launched the canoe. It leaked a trifle at both ends. Pushing with his thumb on the soft pitch, Dan stopped the leaks and then put in his furs. It was good to feel a paddle in his hands again! The little canoe just held them and their duffel with a few scant inches of freeboard. It would be no good on any wide and squally lake.

The backwater took them up several miles of swift paddling; then began a shallow stream bed full of rapids and boulders, obstructed everywhere with down trees and log jams. Dan waded and towed, and made numerous short carries. He was glad to see the next beaver dam announcing a new swamp ahead. Up its spillway he hauled the canoe with everything in it and launched it over the crest of muddy sticks. The sharp slap of beaver tails on the water giving their warning signal greeted his appearance.

Dan plied his paddle, singing as he went. He hoped that this swamp would be a long one. It twisted and turned in wide bends contained by the low heights of land. Ducks traded up and down it; so he strung the light bow and shot a number of them as the canoe came around marsh points and the ducks tried hurriedly to 'plane up off the water. Then came the stream bed again and another toilsome stretch of wading in icy water and boosting the canoe over tree trunks. Nature never gave you a prize without making you fight for it! This route had already decided him on cutting across direct to Lac Seul when he finally went out on snowshoes.

At last the pond came in sight. A third beaver dam had made its entire ravine navigable. The canoe cut through a narrow gap in the granite hills and there it was, banks of birches and deciduous trees in their yellows and reds and purples, greeneries of fir and spruce and balsam—a paradise, as Dan viewed it! Coves of waving wild-rice plumes filled its angles; the pond was full of ducks, upended, getting their last feed before the ice drove them south.

Singing happily, Dan drove the canoe across to where he had spied a cleared space along the opposite bank. It bore every sign of an Indian encampment; the remains of a sweat lodge near shore, peeled tepee poles stacked against a birch tree, the pole arches of a wigwam.

"Red Brother's land, Pep," Dan said as the canoe floated off the clearing. "We'll go find our own site."

He paddled on past several birchy points. One with a tiny rill flowing into the pond to one side of it he recognized, in that subtle way we have, as HOME. Up that rill a short distance would be a spring; a thick mass of broad, yellow leafage told him that a dense thicket of maple saplings had taken possession of the rill soil to grow in. They would furnish him plentiful long thin poles.

Dan had in mind a wigwam frame of them. Snow would fall, thick and heavy as soon as this clear, dry weather was over. No open-front camp would be really habitable then. He needed a place to live and work in out of the weather. A small wigwam, ten feet long by seven wide, and high enough to stand up in comfortably, would be his ideal home.

They slept under the canoe that night and were up by the gray of dawn. Dan had to catch the sun for the date while he had it. He cut a straight wand of maple and drove it in upright on the little beach in front of his point. The sun would rise due east these days. As its red globe appeared over the low uplands to the east, Dan sighted it over his wand. Driving in a peg in line with it, he joined it to the wand by a string of cedar bark. To get a right angle, he cut a large square of birch bark, folded it to make a straight line, and then folded that on itself to get a right angle. Placing it on the string at the foot of the wand, he pegged out a second line at right angles to the first. This line would be due

north and south, and would be ready for observation by noon.

After breakfast he and Pepper looked over their site for the wigwam. The one reasonably clear space on the point was centered by a birch some four inches thick. Get that out of the way and the seedlings around it could be torn up or cut off with his knife. Dan had efficient bone chisels, made of the leg bones of his deer, but he did not fancy the tedious chore of getting the tree down with them and a hammer-stone. It would be better uprooted. He needed the hole, anyway, for a fireplace.

Accordingly, he cut a maple spud and began digging out along the roots with it. The chisel severed these in turn, a few feet out. Dan pushed and swayed at the tree with his spud till it finally crashed over, exposing its tap root. This he gnawed in two with blows of the granite tooth of his war club, and then rolled the tree out of the way.

A session of cutting poles in the maple thicket followed. Dan returned to the homesite with eight slender ones about twelve feet long over his shoulder. These he joined in pairs by lashing their whip ends together with cedar bark. He then cut a sharp stake and drove a series of deep holes down into the soil with a heavy pounding-stone. These holes were four on a side, two feet apart, and seven feet—two long strides and a moccasined foot—across from each other. He then sprung his maple poles into the arches and set their feet into

the holes, driving them down firmly with the strong push of his weight. The cross-frames of his wigwam were now up. It began to look like home.

It needed, next, two longitudinal arches. Dan cut these of stouter poles, an inch and a half thick and twenty feet long. He tied a long cord to the end of one of these and then raised the long pole with all his strength. When shoved down into its hole it bent over the wigwam frame in a long swinging semicircle. He pulled on the cord and drew down the end to him. Bending it by main strength, Dan forced it down into its hole and then shoved the second pole end down till it stopped. When the second one was in place, he lashed their crossings to the four side arches with turns of cedar bark. It bent the long arches to flat sharp turns at both ends.

He now needed only the horizontal thatch-withes to complete his wigwam frame. Dan cut very slender, young, shade-killed maples for these. When tied together, he wrapped them around the frame in three rings two feet apart. They were lashed to all the arches and it made a stout frame that would withstand any wind.

The sun was high when the frame was finished and ready for marshgrass thatch. Dan went down to his wand and tied his fishline to its top; then stood ready watching the wand's shadow on the beach. It still stood eastward but was slowly creeping toward his north-and-south string, when the sun would cross the meridian. When the shadow was exactly on

It began to look like home

it, Dan drove in a peg at its end and joined it by his string to the wand top. He had the angle of the sun. On September twenty-first it would be exactly his own latitude of fifty degrees north. He folded his birch-bark right angle again, giving him forty-five degrees. Applying it to the strings, it came out a short amount under.

That would be all for today. Tomorrow the sun would tell him which way it was going. If the shadow was longer, it would be already past the twenty-first, if shorter, they had not yet reached it. Dan untied his fishline and launched the canoe. The pond was covered with wavelets. It had not frozen over the night before, but it would on the first still night. He and Pepper had all their wild rice to lay in before that.

He headed for a cove that was joyous with the notes of blackbirds and bobolinks filling themselves to bursting from the wild rice plumes. Dan bent over the outer fronds with a long stick. Showers of the hairy little brown ears fell on the smooth canoe bottom. When he had several pecks of them he paddled leisurely back to camp, thinking of the marvelous soup of wild rice and blueberries that he and Pepper would have this night. He had no time to thresh and winnow his store now, so with his hands he rubbed enough grains out of their husks to make a soup. The clay bowl was set over the fire where they could simmer all afternoon. Dan had adopted the Indian regime of two meals a day. Daylight was too valuable to be wasted.

He and Pepper set out again to collect marsh grass. In an hour he had cropped a canoe-load of it. The ducks had gotten used to him. Mallard, widgeon, sprigtail and teal, they were all as tame as puddle ducks. They merely swam out of his way as the canoe crossed back to camp.

Dan went into the thickets seeking dead white cedars. Cordage in quantities he peeled off them, and then set about weaving his marsh grass to the withes in bundles about three inches thick. The lowest tier went on with their bottoms pressed down into the duff. Dan kept his light bow strung and its pine arrows handy as he worked. Ducks in families kept swimming past his point. When a whole raft of little green-winged teal clustered close by, he launched three arrows among them in quick succession. Pepper swam out to retrieve the two that had been hit. The third arrow floated some distance out, like a small buoy, with its feathers up and point down in the water. Dan pointed it out.

"Go fetch it, Pep! That's a good dog!"

Pepper plunged in again. He had done this before with thrown sticks.

"Easy now!" Dan warned, laughing. "Don't break it! Fetch!"

To Pepper that word meant to bring in a grouse or a duck held gently by one wing. He nabbed at the arrow, got it in his teeth, and came swimming back with it held crosswise in his muzzle. Dan praised him extravagantly and gave him a hunk of pemmican. Pepper wagged his tail proudly. He was

immensely pleased with his new accomplishment of arrow retrieving!

It was sunset when the second tier of grass bundles was lashed on their withe. These went on the wigwam with their plume ends down, so they would shed water. Dan knocked off work and went berry gathering while he still had light. The huckleberries were loose on their twigs, dropping into his hand at the touch. It warned him that soon they would all be down. How fast Nature worked, and he had everything yet to do! He would be a month in the wigwam before they would be ready to leave over the snows.

Dan dropped the berries into his wild-rice soup and stripped the teal for broiling. He decided to move his fire into the wigwam. He lined the hole left by the birth tree with stones, and then carried some coals to the nest of bark curls and twigs which he had made. The blaze leaped up. Here was a home, of sorts, though only an inclosure of brown marsh grass four feet high. He moved in. Most of the loose stones had been removed to line the fireplace. Dan scooped hollows in the duff along one side of the wigwam for his hips and shoulders and rolled out his bearskin sleeping bag. He arranged a lair for Pepper on the opposite side. The bowl of steaming rice soup was brought in, and while it was cooling, Dan broiled the teal breasts. They had a grand feed on platters of birch bark; then he worked by the fire-light on the third tier of thatch till there was no grass left.

There was an immense hole still left above, through which the pitiless stars would shine and the cold strike like a knife. Dan was hungry for home, warmth, shelter. He went out into the night to a spruce tree and cut off six of its long frondlike branches. These he laid over the roof of the wigwam frame for the night.

The interior responded immediately. The smoke drifted up through the fronds, but their needles reflected back its heat rays. The thatch was growing warm to his hand. Dan grew sleepy with a sense of warmth and comfort and soon crawled into his bag. It had been a wonderful day for his first in this new home!

He awoke and looked at his grass walls with a delightful sense of proprietorship. It was the first house that he had ever owned. He had loved the little bark hut, but it was a mere sleeping place and you had to scurry around outside in the cold to get the fire going and cook breakfast. This wigwam had plenty of room, and the air was warm compared to the bitter dawn that was breaking over the pond outside. There were live embers in his fire pit, and its stones were still hot.

"This berry situation, Pep," Dan told his yawning and stretching dog, "will have to be taken in hand immediately. Those huckles told us they would soon all be down. Pemmican is not too good without berries. A man craves sugar in the North."

He went out and scanned his kingdom for the appropriate

bushes. The north shore of the pond had sunny and indented banks, where moisture-loving viburnums and wild cherries and the northern hawthorn disputed for sunlight with the birches and poplars. Dan noted several clumps of service berries, yellow in leaf and blue with fruit. There were a few taller orange and yellow growths that might be either the Canada plum or the common wild cherry. He had so much to do before the ice that he had to plan the essentials carefully. This day would comprise, he decided, another canoe-load of marsh grass, a visit to the bulrush cove for roots and stalks, and then the berry store.

The wigwam warmed up while the wild rice was cooking and a duck being broiled. Dan then paddled over to the marsh-grass meadow and cropped nearly a canoe-load of it. He reserved a space for bulrushes. Their roots made excellent tubers, either boiled or raw, and he would need their stalks for a winnowing basket for the wild-rice threshing.

By mid-afternoon the last of the thatch was on. It left an oblong smoke hole in the roof—at which the young householder looked with disfavor. The Indian way was just to let the snow sift in, but he proposed to make a chimney-cover of birch bark, raised a few inches above the hole, just like a white man's chimney cowl. A door of the same material would also be needed; but there was no time for it now. He and Pepper went berry picking, and by sunset had returned with a huge bark cone filled with juicy service-berries (called

nanny-berries by his boyhood chums), wild cherries, huckles, and perhaps a quart of purple Canada plums gathered from a few bushes growing hardily on the upland slopes.

Next morning he went to a large canoe birch a foot in diameter growing near the point, and peeled from it two squares, one four feet and one two feet long. It took him all morning to sew straight willow wands along the edges. To the larger one he tied four stakes and then shoved it up on the roof of his wigwam. Going inside, he drove the stakes down through the thatch, so that the cover stood some six inches over the smoke hole. The other square he hinged to the lower withe crossing his door opening. It made a self-closing flap door.

Dan stood and surveyed his house, with the smoke curling lazily out under its bark cover. He remembered how his father and mother, after eleven years of pinching and self-denial, had finally torn up the mortgage on their house with great rejoicings. This house had cost him but two days of work, and was pleasant with grassy vegetable odors inside, and was in every way healthier and better than theirs. It seemed a heavy burden that civilization imposed on the breadwinner to own his wigwam.

That afternoon he cut off the bulrush leaves and laid them aside for basketry. Some of the roots he decided to boil with hot stones in his elm-bark bowl, since the clay one was already in use stewing meat on the fire inside. While he was

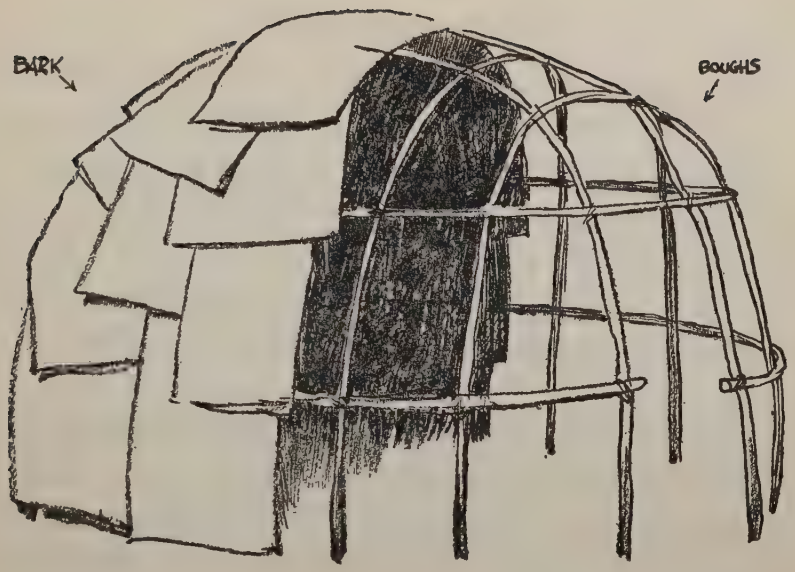
at it, a low and uncertain growl came from Pepper. Dan looked up, to see an Indian youth standing nearby. His hand was held up in sign of peace. He was tall and straight as a lance. His buckskin shirt was richly embroidered with porcupine-quill floral and leaf designs. Its fringes were dyed green and his shoulder and legging straps were brilliant with quill-work. Those characteristic tribal decorations proclaimed him a Cree.

"How!" said the youth. "You People-of-the-Hot-Stones?" he asked, meaning the Assiniboin.

"No: Arapaho," said Dan. "My name Nawaqua (He-who-dwells-in-the-woods)."

"My name James Henry Nimigosh," said the young Cree. "My father was factor at Ogoki Post. Marry Cree girl; verrie pretty. He come drowned in rapids one time," he added solemnly.

It was the Indian girl who had drawn the races together all over the North, and had established understanding and justice and peace with her people. Dan knew that the contemptuous talk about "breeds" was an untruthful fiction-writer's device to have a satisfactory "villain." A great many factors and clerks had married Indian girls, since 'way back in the times of Kelsey and his Blackfoot bride. The children were sent to Scotland or England to be educated; the girls invariably, the boys sometimes. There was no artificial race prejudice up here in the Hudson's Bay Country.



"My grandmother Arapaho," Dan said. "Proud of it!"

The Cree boy laughed. "You white man, just the same!" he said, and pointed at Dan's smoke hole cover. "No good! Snow come in."

Dan smiled. "Come inside and I'll show you, James Henry Nimigosh," he said cordially. "You Christian?" he added, thinking of those Jacobite names given in memory of the Scottish kings.

"No, Presbyterian," Nimigosh said with the utmost seriousness.

Dan laughed. "I'm Church; Episcopalian," he said.

"No good! All show," James Henry shook his head stoutly.

"It goes deeper than that," Dan said and laughed again. He was delighted to have a friend to talk to, at last, and they had started somehow on religion.

"'Pisau!' That is lynx!" Nimigosh joked, trying to pronounce "Episcopalian." He was inclined to pursue the subject.

"Come, I show you how it works," Dan cut him off as they entered the wigwam. He pulled down on two of the bark cover stakes. Immediately it slanted so that the smoke poured out the opposite side. "Wind come so, no snow come in," Dan explained his invention.

Nimigosh was delighted with it. "White man's trick!" he commented. He looked curiously at all Dan's tools and utensils, with the swift observation of his race. He hefted the two bows and the war club.

"You got no iron, no gun?" he asked.

"I got nothing!" Dan said. "Make all myself." He told James Henry about his shipwreck on Lac Seul, and how he had come up from destitution since, starting with nothing but his hunting knife. The Indian boy listened attentively and with growing enthusiasm.

"It is good," he said. "Now I know that you are Indian. But you no go on to Factory Saint Joseph! It is bad trip. Game all gone. Plenty wolves. Roots all frozen. . . . You

stay here. My uncle, Chief Tawabisnay, he say so—I think."

That last with hesitation. James Henry knew that he had no authority to welcome Dan to their pond. The rights of habitation were strictly defined by the Hudson's Bay Company. This pond and its trapping rights belonged to Nimigosh's Cree clan. Clearly a visit to the chief was indicated.

"Come, we go to my people," James Henry said.

They launched Dan's canoe. Pepper, who was just a bit jealous of this stranger, got in barking and wagging his tail with delight. Dan paused and looked at the sun.

"Just a moment, Nimigosh," he said.

The wand shadow was slightly east of noon. Dan picked up a peg and waited. Then he drove it in at the head of the shadow. It came inside his peg of yesterday. The sun was still declining, so it was not yet the twenty-first.

"Why you do dat?" Nimigosh asked.

"I want to know the date," Dan said. "Do you know?"

James Henry shrugged his shoulders. "Hunter's Moon," he said. "We leave Fort Albany in Corn Moon. Come up Ogoki to Lake Savant. Make long carry—twent'-five miles. Better than by Lac Seul!"

They paddled alongshore to the Indian clearing. Squaws had set up the tepee poles and were struggling together with the lifting-pole, which had a long skin of caribou hide dangling from it. As the canoe paused, the two younger girls

grabbed ends of the tepee cover and drew them out to wrap deftly around the frame while the older woman was letting the lifting-pole fall against the others. Nimigosh jumped ashore to help them. In a trice he had shinned up one of the door poles and was catching the fastening pins thrown up to him by the girls. They were already driving in the floor pegs.

Dan waited, drifting offshore a short distance. The Indian dogs, Malemute and hound crosses, were barking fiercely at Pepper. He was quite as belligerent as they, since he was entirely safe out there in the canoe. Dan brushed at his long, tousled hair and tried to tidy his wolverine-skin jacket. These Indians had a pride in their appearance. Their hair was in long, neat braids. He felt embarrassed and quite definitely the wild man of the woods. He caught suppressed giggles from the girls driving tent pegs and pretending not to notice him.

James Henry finished lacing down the long row of pins. In less than five minutes the tepee had taken form as a large, habitable dwelling. The old squaw was adjusting its smoke-flap poles to her liking. Dan heard the thump of moccasins coming through the woods as he studied the decorations on the tepee, none of which he could make out, though he was used to Plains tepees. Three men appeared, carrying great loads by the tump straps across their foreheads. They threw them down with a twist of the head and talked awhile with

Nimigosh. Their Cree was too rapid for Dan, but James Henry's hands were expressive. No Indian can avoid short cuts by the sign language in his talk! He was telling them Dan's story.

The short, stout man with broad canoe shoulders came down to the landing with Nimigosh.

"This my uncle, Chief Tawabisnay," the latter said.

"How!" said Dan gravely.

The chief could not take his eyes from that wolverine fur. "My son is brave to have fought makugun with only bow and spear," he said. "He is honest; he has not touched our corn." Tawabisnay gestured with a sweep of his arm. Dan saw the brown tassels of a clump of corn rising above the bush growth at the back of the clearing. He had been too busy to investigate their campsite. He would not have touched it, anyhow. They planted the corn before they left with the furs in the spring, and found it ripe and ready when they returned.

"My son is welcome to our pond," Tawabisnay said. "He is our guest . . . but do not go to Lac Saint Joseph," he added, addressing Dan directly. "It is the land of snow and hunger when winter comes."

Dan smiled. "I thank you for your words, O Chief," he said. "But my father expects me at Osnaburgh House. His heart will cry if he does not hear from me. I must make snowshoes and a toboggan and push on as soon as the snow comes."

Tawabisnay considered that. "Your words are brave, my son," he said. His buckskinned arm swept up and pointed at a cove down the pond bank. "To make a toboggan you will need ahgemauk (the ash tree). Take!"

"We'll lend you an ax, Nawaqua," James Henry put in eagerly. The other two bucks had come forward and stood looking at Dan with broad grins on their friendly copper faces. They were introduced as Mastigusha and Kenganowog. Dan was touched by the offer of that ash tree. It stood tall and slender in a straight shaft of gray, its brown pinnate leaves already falling. He knew it for the black ash, the first tree to drop its leaves in the fall.

"Sure you'll not need it yourselves, O Chief?" he asked, for it was the only one of its family in sight.

"We have plenty toboggan, my son," Tawabisnay said. "Take it. Get him an ax, Nimigosh."

Dan shook his head. "My thanks, O Chief, but with only my knife I have made everything for myself. It is a game that our fathers played with the forest, in the old days. They had no white man's iron then. We do not need it now. I will find a flint rock and make my own ax."

They received that with murmurs of interest and eyes sparkling with enthusiasm. Tawabisnay said: "We, too, once made our arrowheads and war-club points of flint. I remember them, in the days of the grandfathers. This place has been the home of our clan since long before then. There is

a great heap of old rubbish yonder." He pointed toward a small gully on the other side of their point. "My son may find some flint stones there."

Dan agreed to that. It would save him days of searching for a flint nodule. They were so rare in this region as to become the subject of barter with the Ojibways to the south. He put the canoe ashore and immediately they were all occupied with a tremendous dog fight as all the Indian dogs set upon Pepper.

A laughing and growling peace being restored, Dan went with James Henry to their kitchen midden. They dug into it with a stake, and old rusty iron, tin cans, and rotting cloth came first to view. Then, lower down, the stake threw up pottery shards, broken bones, a bone awl or two, some gambling stones, and arrow points of flint with their ears missing. Dan kept those; he could easily chip new ears. Soon the stake struck rock and up came a large, dirty flint nodule, with one side of it already concave. It had been thrown here long ago, when the fur trader's packets of iron arrowheads, a dozen for a beaver skin, had made the Indian abandon flint forever.

Dan picked up his prize. "My thanks, Nimigosh!" he said. "I was worried about flint. This north bank might have some, but this saves a lot of searching."

"May I watch you make?" James Henry asked eagerly. "We have forgotten the ways of the grandfathers. Some day

I, too, may lose my canoe!" He laughed merrily, but under it Dan detected a keen curiosity.

"You have dances yet? Feasts of the wild-rice gathering?" Dan asked him with equal eagerness. "I would watch, too!"

"Sure 'bout dat! Come; I show you my drum!"

One of the Indian girls stopped him on the way back to the tepee. She was young and pretty. Shyly she touched Dan's wolverine skin with one finger.

"My name Memengwa (Butterfly)," she said. "I sew you nice jacket. Thongs no good for cold!"

So far, Dan had contented himself with thongs tied through slits cut under the armpits and down his waist on each side. He smiled and declined her offer, however.

"My thanks, O sister; but my medicine is to do everything with these two hands," he explained his refusal.

"*Ptu!* Your fingers are clumsy!" she said, and saucily turned her back on him.

The campsite was strewn with belongings unrolled from huge packs. Everyone was at work. From a maple thicket back up their brook came the ring of axes, where Mastigusha and Kenganowog were cutting long sappy poles for their wigwam. Tawabisnay was helping the older squaw put up a pole frame for the food cache. James Henry seemed left to do the honors as host. He pulled his drum and its stick out of the pack pile and Dan fingered it hungrily. It was a flat, single-headed drum, about a foot and a half in diameter,

with a taut caribou skin stretched over it. Dan grasped its spreader-sticks in his left fist and began the lively rhythm of the calumet dance. The resonant musical notes of the drum set their feet tapping. James Henry laughed merrily and started the stamp-steps. Tawabisnay grunted with appreciation. He stopped work to rummage in the pack litter for his peace-pipe bag. It, like the drum, was beautifully ornamented with quill-work and had fringes of dyed buckskin. He tapped it with one finger.

"You come, this evening, my son. There will be meat in the lodge. We will light the pipe for *He-who-understands*."

The Chief had given Dan a new name. This was a delicate compliment to the white boy who knew and appreciated these people through his strain of Arapaho blood.

"I will come, O Chief," Dan said. He called Pepper to come to the canoe.

Arrived at his wigwam, he found a stone hardhead and set to work immediately on his flint nodule. Spalls flaked off it in large curved pieces as he pounded. Selecting one about the size of his granite war-club point, Dan cut a leather palm guard from a wolf-skin foreleg. He made a large hole for his thumb and slipped the guard over his left palm. Grasping the spall in that hand, he started flaking its edges with an antler tine. You had but to press hard against the edge with the antler point to have a small chip flake off. The guard saved his hand from painful punches.

In time it was shaped to fit his war-club socket. Dan cut the thongs and pulled out the piece of granite. His flint point was much keener and had a cutting blade. Wrapping it with fresh, wet rawhide thongs, he set it aside to draw and harden. He longed to canoe over to the ash tree with it, but you had to wait in the outdoor industries, or spoil everything by going at things too soon. He had yet to make his winnowing tray.

He fashioned this out of bulrush leaves. Four of them were tied together at right angles to each other, much as a Washington chair is made by grasping four fists around wrists. You had but to repeat this at each stalk in turn, the blades weaving under and over their neighbors as they crossed. By mid-afternoon Dan had a large flat bulrush tray, which he finished by turning over the leaf ends around a circular withe of willow wand.

He made a hollow in the soil, next, and filled it with a wolf skin with the skin side up. Into this basin he heaped his wild-rice ears and began threshing them with his feet. Handfuls were dumped on the tray and winnowed of their chaff by tossing them up in the breeze. The brown grains, looking like little broken twigs, were dumped into a fresh birch-bark cone. His big birch-bark basket was filled to the brim with them when the threshing was over. Dan carried it thankfully into his wigwam. The sun was setting and it was time for his visit with the Crees. Dan thought out a brief message to his father while bathing and tidying himself up for the occasion.

If he wrote it on birch bark, perhaps the chief would send one of the men out with it to the nearest mail route. Among the Crees it would not require a postage stamp to be accepted. Such messages were sacred to the carriers of the North.

Dan found his Indian friends playing a game that, like most Indian games, had a practical bearing on their lives. The path beside the corn patch had been cleared of its summer weeds. Along it Mastigusha was rolling a hoop that was covered with rawhide webbing. Kenganowog and Nimigosh stood some thirty paces off with their bows. They were trying to pierce its webbing with their arrows as it rolled.

It was hilarious sport. The hoop went as fast as a running deer; if you missed, you had to take your turn as roller. Dan was not long in stringing his light bow and joining in. He was astonished at the amount of lead you had to give that hoop. He missed by some fifteen feet with his first shot. The Indian boys laughed but were too courteous to make him take his turn as roller.

Dan strung his red cedar war bow, then. The other was far too slow. He found that a lead of twenty feet would hit the hoop, and then began to score with the others in the game.

"Rabbit, fox, deer, all run when snow come. Moos be shoot ahead for kill 'um," James Henry told him. "We no use rifle, except for caribou."

Cartridges were too expensive to be used for small game, Dan gathered. Their bows were short and stout, of seasoned

hornbeam and rock elm backed with rawhide. The cheap iron arrowhead, stamped out in a mill in Scotland, furnished their points. They simply needed to slot the arrow shaft with a small saw and wrap the iron shank with gut.

They played at this useful game for an hour in the long twilight; then the flickering northern lights in the sky and the sound of a drum in the tepee stopped the shooting.

"My uncle ready," Nimigosh said. "You bring bow, spear club. Him like to see 'em."

It was picturesque inside the tepee. Willow stick backrests were arranged around the fire, each with its tripod of stakes holding the back up by an ornamented strap. A savory stew steamed near the fire in an iron kettle; a copper one held tea; there was a great bowl of white samp, the corn rinds having been leached off by soaking in wood ashes before boiling. The girls served the feast in maple-knob bowls.

After it was over, Chief Tawabisnay drew his peace pipe from its bag. Its bowl was of red catlinite and had come a long distance from that quarry on the Mississippi. The stem was of decorated black ash, which has a pith in its saplings that can easily be bored out. It gave Dan an idea. He smiled as he thought of the way they bored it. . . .

The Chief scorned a coal from the fire. He took his fire sticks while James Henry was tapping the Calumet Dance rhythms on the drum. As Tawabisnay began sawing with the bow, he said:

"I know not if the voice of man can reach the sky;
I know not if the Mighty One will hear us pray;
I know not if the word of old hath been received . . ."

Then as the fire came in a little rill of smoke and the Chief was fanning it with his hand, he continued:

"Now I know that the voice of man can reach to heaven!
Now I know the Mighty One hath heard me when I prayed!
Now I know the word of old we have truly heard!"

He tilted the coal of new fire over on the brown kinnikinnick bark in the pipe bowl, blew a puff toward the sky, and said:

"I offer this to Gitche Manitou, who sends all the good that comes from above."

His squaw took it and blew a puff to the ground. "I offer this to Mother Earth, who gives all good gifts."

Mastigusha took the pipe. He blew to the north and said: "I offer this to the North Wind, who sends us down the caribou."

Kenganowog followed him. He blew to the east and said: "I offer this to the East Wind, who sends the tracking snows."

Memengwa took the pipe next. She blew to the south and said: "I offer this to the South Wind, who smiles on our corn."

The last was the girl called Rosebud. She blew to the west and said: "I offer this to the West Wind, who paints the flowers in the springtime."

The pipe returned to Tawabisnay. He puffed on it reflectively; then handed it to Dan.

"Our young brother is welcome to all we have," he said. "I know not why he is here . . . but he knows the ways of our grandfathers. Arrows like his of bone I remember when a small boy. His spear and his war club are like those we fought the Assiniboins with, before the great council on Peace River. He understands our life. . . . It is strange . . . the white man always wants trade. It is in my mind that our brother makes a thick-writing (book). I have spoken."

Dan knew that he was expected to make a "talk." They had all settled down to various small tasks while listening. Nimigosh, who as musician had not taken the pipe but had been chanting, got out a small, grooved stone for straightening arrows and put it on the fire. Mastigusha and Kenganowog were unwrapping a thick bundle of willow and viburnum shoots. They would be arrow shafts when straightened over the hot stone. The two girls, Butterfly and Rosebud, were making baskets and had a bag of porcupine quills which they were linking into a long, shiny cord by pushing the sharp ends into the hollow butts of the quills. The squaw was powdering oak roots to make dye. Dan drew a puff of the aromatic smoke and said:

"Once, long ago, O Knisteneaux, my people and the Utes held a great council. The white men to the south were greedy, then. They took our hunting grounds. They gave the Arapaho and the Ute other lands that were barren. We had to eat gophers and snakes, or starve. . . . 'Let us go to the north,' we said, 'where the white man is just, and there is plenty to eat. He will let us live, so long as we bring him furs.'

"We trekked a long trek. Our warriors and old men; our women and children. The ponies and dogs were burdened with travois poles. All we had we took. We went many miles through the great mountains, seeking your land where the game was plenty and the white man would treat us well. Two thousand miles we went."

Dan paused impressively over that astonishing march. "But, I know not why, word went from the Great White Father in Washington that we were to be stopped. . . . The soldiers could not find us. They searched the great mountains, but our trails were well hidden. We had nearly reached our cousins, the Assiniboins, when the Blackfeet told where we were. The soldiers rode upon us. My grandfather begged for the Indians. The soldier-chief said he had his orders. We must go back."

Dan paused for another puff, while murmers of sympathy went around the lodge. All work stopped. The Crees listened, breathless.

"We fought, then," said Dan. "We would not go back to

starve! The Ute had never fought them before, but the Arapaho had. Our warriors were valiant and skillful with the rifle, but the soldiers were too many. They killed men, women, and children with their volleys of bullets. My grandfather took his Indian wife away, then. She never saw the Arapaho tepees again. They were taken prisoner, far to the south.

"That was long ago, my brothers," Dan said. "It is my father who now makes the thick-writing, that the greedy white men to the south may understand the Indian and be ashamed. I help him. He is in the lodges of the Shoshone now. But I canoed to the north to learn the ways of your people, so that he may write them down in his book. There are great houses where all things that the Indians make are kept in glass cases; where all white men may come to see them and know how splendid a man is his red brother. In a little while comes the snow and I go on to Osnaburgh House. There the Cree may bring me the beautiful things that they make. The Factor will give credit for them, the same as furs. I have spoken."

He had told them his mission well. Eagerly they all looked at Tawabisnay. The chief smoked awhile in silence.

"There is no need for my son to go to Osnaburgh House," he said. "Give!"

His clan sprang up and pressed their treasures upon Dan; Nimigosh his prized drum, the girls handsome garments em-

broidered with quill-work, the men their bows, arrows, anything about the lodge that they could lay hands on. Dan could accept none of them.

"O my people!" he said with shining eyes. "It is for me to give presents! Here am I, on your hunting grounds, and made free of your plenty. Else would I be wandering on the bleak shores of Lac Seul, no rice, no game, no shelter. Look you. My rice is gathered; my wigwam is thatched. No more need have I of my canoe; but your need is great, till the ice comes. . . . Take!"

Tawabisnay grunted. "My son is generous," he said. "The things that we make, we can make more of. He is welcome to those that we have—to send to the big house, so that the white men can learn of us," he insisted.

It was a delicate matter and might cause affront to refuse. Dan thought he saw a way out and said:

"My thanks, O Chief. We will talk of that later, but there is one thing that you can do for me now. My father will be anxious because he does not hear from me. I should have been at Factory Saint Joseph long ago. Is there a mail route where I can send a writing?"

Tawabisnay grinned. "Dog team, he come across from Osnaburgh to Nipigon Post when snow come. You write! I send Kenganowog. We have canoes cached on Ogoki water."

Dan thanked him. It meant a good deal to spare one active man at the very beginning of the fur season, when

there was so much to do. He could picture Kenganowog tracking through the forest, launching one of their canoes on some remote backwater of the Ogoki, and paddling down it to intercept the mail team. He might have to hike it the whole way if the ice formed ahead of the snow.

Dan borrowed a grouse quill from those that Kenganowog was cutting up for arrow vanes and softening between damp buckskins to take the curve out of them. The squaw offered him some of her black dye, of oak splinters with a nail in the liquor. Dan split the nib of the quill and wrote:

"To the factor, H. B. Nipigon Post: Please write my father, Dr. Amos Pickett at Medicine Knee, Wyoming, that I lost my canoe on Lac Seul and will not reach Osnaburgh House until November. Tell him not to worry. I am doing well, and will push on by tobogagan and snowshoe. Dan Pickett."

The writing gave the sounds of these English words equally as well as if in Algonkian Cree. Any Indian mail runner could read them. He would know that it was not an ordinary message. The Factor would send on a letter with a postage stamp on it and all would be well.

Dan little realized the consternation that letter would cause his father. "Doing well"—indeed! With his canoe lost, and probably everything in it! And "pushing on by toboggan and snowshoe"—into a country of hunger and death, and infested by wolves in winter! As a matter of fact, the good Doctor was

not two hours in breaking off his stay with the Shoshones and taking the next train to Manitoba after the arrival of that letter. The Factor had added some sound advice, we may be sure.

Chapter XI

LOST IN THE BARREN GROUNDS

Dan left his canoe with the Crees and walked back to his wigwam along the lake bank. The Indians were out in it all the next day, ferrying over the loads of marsh grass, while he chipped and labored at the ash. Instinct told him to lay in meat while he might, for this day was clear and still, the pond a glassy mirror. He shot a quantity of ducks as they came swimming by, in between time chipping notches in the hard ash with his club blade and then splitting the spalls off with a bone chisel. In the evening he borrowed his canoe, filled it full of ducks, and paddled over to camp towing his

ash log, a store of six-foot saplings he had cut for snowshoe frames, and a blowpipe. Dan knew the ways of ash trees. Their seeds, like small winged javelins, scattered to the lee of the prevailing wind, and as the wind in summer was southwest, he had but to search to the northeast of his tree to come upon a grove of its saplings.

The ice formed that night. It seemed queer not to hear the incessant quacking of ducks as Dan rolled out of his sleeping bag the next morning. Only a couple of loons were left to break the silence over the pond with their mocking calls. They could chip the thin ice with their bills. The ducks had all risen in one mighty cloud, some time during the night, and had flown off to the south.

Dan was thankful for his warm house. Leisurely he started splitting his ash trunk. Its sap rings were so wide that the Indians beat on the small branches with clubs to loosen them, so that they would peel off in strips for basket making. This trunk gave him four, straight, thin planks about ten feet long and five inches wide. The ends of these he greased and heated over the fire; then he went out and bent them over his prone birch trunk and tied them down so they would set in a curl.

The straightest of his saplings Dan selected for a blowgun. He would have to depend on spruce grouse for small game now, and lost arrows were too costly for these. Darts were just as effective at close range and they were easy to make. His ash wand was about three feet long in its straight part and it

had a soft, white pith. Dan had no iron wire to bore it out with, but he knew an Indian trick for that. He went out into the forest and found a dead spruce. Thumbing off a spall of bark, he found the fat white borer grub that had helped kill the tree. He made a small hole in the wand pith for this interesting insect. The borer did not like ash pith, so Dan plugged him in and then set that end of the wand near the fire. Its heat set the borer to work frantically for freedom. With an ear to the wand Dan heard him coming up the core inside. All he had to do was to move the rod on over a hot stone to keep him going.

While he was splitting and peeling the remaining ash saplings for snowshoe frames, the borer came out the upper end of his wand. A tumble of fine, white sawdust; then an indignant brown head. Dan pulled him out.

"Poor beastie! Pity you're so destructive! Here, Pep!"

He tossed the grub. Pepper, always ready to eat anything, caught the succulent morsel in his jaws. Dan blew out the sawdust and sighted through the bore. It needed straightening a little. To find just where he bent the wand in his hands while sighting through it. At the proper place he greased it and held it over the fire until it stayed set. He made a set of short darts of dead balsam twigs and then set out with Pepper for the place where they had picked hawthorns from the bushes on the pond bank. He needed the long, sharp thorns for dart points.

This northern variety of the abundant family of *Crataegus* grew on the bank of the wild-rice cove. As Dan and Pepper footed toward it, the Indian girls passed by on the ice, carrying beating sticks and bark bowls. He stood and admired them awhile. They were as beautifully clothed as any of the Plains girls. Flower designs in quill-work ornamented their long buckskin gowns and shoulder capes. Stripes of it ran down their leggings to the brilliant moccasins. What beadwork they had was used as jewelry, in belts and clasps.

The Smithsonian could well use those garments in dressing a Cree Indian group, Dan thought; but he shook his head as he heard the ice popping ominously under the girls. They seemed unafraid and slid along merrily on their moccasins. Dan went on to his hawthorn bushes.

It was while slicing off a store of the thorns that he heard a sudden crash, cries, splashings in open water. Instantly he jumped down to shore and put his foot on the ice. *Crack!* Splitting rays shot out from under his moccasin. It would not quite hold his weight; but there was one thing left to do, to run so swiftly that it would not have time to break.

"Come on, Pep!" Dan cried as he slid out on the ice. It cracked and popped under him, but he raced onward with the surface following him in a kind of billow. Pepper's claws clicked on the glassy sheet. As he reached the rice plumes, Dan lowered himself in a long glide and spread-eagled flat on the ice. It cracked, but held him. He found the girl, Rose-

bud, lying flat in a small cove and reaching vainly with her beating-stick. Memengwa floundered in deep water, surrounded by cakes of broken ice, and she broke more of them as she tried to crawl out. She was brave; but panic lurked in her black eyes, for she was swiftly growing numb.

Dan undid his belt and slipped its buckle through the thong of his light bow. It made a kind of whip nine feet long.

"Catch, O sister!" he said. "Easy now—courage!"

She caught the end of his belt and hung on. Dan told Rosebud to crawl behind him and take hold of his feet. "Now Pep!" he cried. "Fetch!"

Once, when Dan was a very small boy, Pepper had rescued him. He had caught a small sunfish, and instead of lifting his pole had kept reaching out for it until he had fallen overboard. Pepper had dashed in before any of the family could arrive and had hauled him out by the seat of his rompers.

The dog now ran to the edge of the ice and made a sudden grab with his muzzle at the fringes on Memengwa's shoulder. He braced himself with his claws dug into the ice.

"Pull, everybody!" Dan yelled. He drew strongly in on his bow. Rosebud held his feet from sliding forward. Memengwa got her breast over the ice edge.

"Kick!" Dan shouted. "Kick hard!"

She splashed the freezing water with her legs. Slowly she slid out, the ice giving way under her. Pepper tugged val-

iantly. Dan and Rosebud backed away. Then with a sudden slide Memengwa came toward them and was safe.

"Run, you girls!" Dan said. "Get to fire, quick!"

He had to crawl every bit of the way back to shore himself. He stopped at his wigwam only long enough to deposit his store of thorns and roll up his bearskin sleeping bag. With it he went on to the Cree encampment.

There was frantic activity there. Tawabisnay and his squaw were hastily covering the sweat lodge with a huge pack skin and heating the stones for it over a fresh fire. The men were gathering wood. Dan found himself the hero in all eyes.

"All that is in my lodge is yours, my son!" Tawabisnay said. "My daughter would be drown! *Wah!*"

"May I go into the tepee, O Father?" Dan asked. "She will need this." He tapped the sleeping-bag roll.

Memengwa was shivering over the tepee fire and Rosebud was rubbing her with furs. She hastily drew a skin over her wet copper body as the youth entered.

"Here!" he said. "Get into this."

He dropped the bag and went out to help them with the sweat-lodge. A skin filled the basin in its interior. Dan cracked a hole in the ice and drew water for it with a bark bucket. Then came the hot stones. As fast as they were ready, Tawabisnay carried them over with bent maple thongs and swirled them around in the basin. Soon the lodge was filled with steam.

"Leave us now, my son," Tawabisnay said. "She come out. Run into lodge and make beeg sweat. Then jump in water and be all right! You no forget you *moos* take presents now!" he added gratefully.

The next morning there were mare's-tails in the sky and it foreboded snow. Dan put his fire sticks and some duck meat in a small belt bag, slung on his quiver, and took up his heavy red-cedar bow to go hunting with Nimigosh. The Indian boy was to get fresh venison for their camp, and Dan to bag his "babiche buck," as he called the one to be cut up for snowshoe thongs. The conditions were very different now than when he had shot his first buck. The deer were wild and nervous. They sensed the coming of winter, with its dread packs of wolves that would hunt them remorselessly over the deep snows.

Dan and Nimigosh, with Pepper at heel, hunted the uplands and ravines for miles around the pond. The frozen ground gave no fresh tracks, nor any scent for Pepper. Nimigosh finally started his buck out of a small alder swamp. It came galloping out for high ground. Twang! went his bow. The arrow hummed over and went smack into its brisket. Nimigosh sat down as the buck bolted snorting into a thicket.

"He come dead pooty soon," he said. "We wait."

They held Pepper, who was growling and struggling in his desire to run ahead and worry that deer. In fifteen minutes Nimigosh got up and went toward the thicket. They found

the buck stone dead. The iron broadhead had cut a frightful wound, shearing clean through a rib.

They parted, and Dan went on, hunting farther and farther away from the pond. It began to snow in wet, sticky flakes.

"That goes better, Pep!" he said. "At least we can track one, now."

They soon ran into fresh prints which led them into a small ravine filled thick with young balsams. Dan approached warily, his arrow on string. Then he heard a crash of breaking dead poles and the buck came galloping through the timber. How fast he went! Dan selected a little opening in the balsams about fifty yards off and waited. The buck came bounding through it, antlers laid back, his legs moving in long, graceful arcs.

Twang! It took the arrow one second to buzz over, but during that time the buck had gone completely past it.

"Missed him, by gorry!" Dan said ruefully. "I need a lot more practice at that hoop!"

He had held more than twenty feet ahead, but it had not been enough. He was discouraged. Save for some chance encounter, a standing shot at a deer was not to be hoped for. He could not spare the wolf skins for babiche. Their fur was too valuable, and it would require a leaching tank and a beaming tool to get the hair off. He would need two of the wolf skins to make long, warm leggings—his cold legs were begging for them now as the snow wet them! The other two would just

about make sleeves for his wolverine jacket, with possibly enough left for a hood. That left no bedding for Pepper.

No, he must have that buck, the boy decided. It took two skins to make a buckskin shirt. You had to have something tight and warm under the furs.

Then, far off over the uplands, he spied a band of wandering caribou; a stag, a hind, and a young spikehorn buck.

Instantly Dan changed all his plans. Why not cut up the buckskin he already had for babiche, and make his clothing of caribou fur? Its hairs were hollow and were the warmest known to the North except the wolverine's. Besides, the caribou were not galloping; they merely paced on and on.

Dan resolved to get that young spikehorn. The wind was northeast, so he and Pepper kept to the south of the caribou. Fast as they went, the caribou seemed to go faster. They never stopped long, just paused to nibble some browse and went on. They took him into an awful country! Time and again he found himself up to his neck in snowy scrags, forcing him to make detours; then he would be crossing frozen tundra bogs, with the caribou always on the sky line ahead. They would not hurry at his occasional appearances, so long as they did not get his scent.

"This won't do, Pepper," Dan said finally. "You'll have to get ahead and turn them . . . *Sssuey!* Sic-'em, dog! Cows!"

Pepper, thus encouraged, raced on ahead. Soon he was barking in front of the stag. It took him for a wolf, and

immediately stopped and lowered its antlers, with the sharp, forward-jutting blades on guard. Dan ran over the tundra; he climbed and scrambled up over the boulders to find Pepper staging a family party with himself as the unwelcome villain. The young buck was moving about uncertainly while Pepper kept the stag and the hind at bay.

Twang—Twang—Twang! Dan's war bow sang as fast as he could loose the arrows. The spikehorn leaped and bawled as the shafts fleshed into him; then he fell over and lay kicking.

Dan called off his prancing dog. More than once Pepper had been gored at by those palmated blades, but he had leaped agilely out of danger. The stag and hind ran off with frightened snorts at the man, just as soon as they were released from the plaguing dog. Dan stood and looked about him. Everywhere were rocky heights of land, tundras, and scrags of tough, gnarly, gray pines. They stretched to the horizon on all sides, as far as the falling snow would let him see. The wind had dropped to a vagrant breeze with the coming of early night.

Here was his caribou; but it slowly dawned upon Dan that he was completely lost in the vast, frozen wastes of the North! All sense of direction was blotted out by the gray sky overhead, the baffling wind on his wet forefinger, and the white haze of limitless snowflakes. All this country looked alike, no matter where you turned. Which way was the pond

and home? The wind gave him no definite answer to that; the snow none at all. Dan felt a sudden spasm of panic—an urge to start blindly off for home, to run. . . . He quelled it. You could walk for miles in this country and not change its aspect one little bit. Inevitably it would be a wide circle that he would make, at that! He sat down to think his problem out.

"Well, where we are, camp is, Pep!" Dan said philosophically. "The first thing to do is to get that caribou skin off."

It was a long job. The young caribou was larger than the biggest buck, and by the time it was done darkness had fallen. The snow came down in a steady *Lisp! lisp! lisp!* There was little wind, and Dan thanked the Great Spirit for that. This carcass would bring wolves; the stronger the wind, the quicker they would scent it and come.

Dan would like to save the meat for his Indian friends, for caribou made delicious pemmican that one could chew on the march. He had once kept a piece of jerked caribou in his vest pocket for two years just to see how long it would stay unspoiled. It remained as good meat as ever. He could cut only the two long tenderloin strips from his caribou now. The skin was wet and heavy; together with the meat it made a great bundle that it was all Dan could do to carry. Dan strung his bow over his shoulder and lifted up the pack. Which way?

The wind told him nothing, but a faint rosy glow in the snow from the aurora borealis gave him, roughly, northwest. It would not do to steer by, for he might miss the pond en-

tirely. The thing to do now was to get as far away from that carcass as possible. The wolves would spend the night fighting over it and not molest him, if he were a mile or so away.

Dan trudged on over the tundra. He was wet and cold, and the trail led northwest direct into the aurora, but no matter —he needed shelter. The tundra ended in boulders and a little ravine filled solid with scrags. There was no way to penetrate any distance into it.

"This will do, Pep," Dan said and set down his bundle. "Gosh, I'm tired!"

He started a cave in the scrags. That name was most expressive! The cleft between the boulders was filled by two gray pines whose stout trunks were protected by the rocks from the bitter colds. A dense canopy of needly tufts filled the space overhead. The snow had banked thick upon them.

Dan lopped off the shade-killed underbranches with his knife, and piled them for firewood. There was little snow under the canopy. He scooped away what there was and exposed the thick bed of pine needles. Feeling around in it, he found enough stones to make a small fireplace.

He unwrapped the caribou skin, pulled it into the cave, and spread it open on the needles with the hair side up. Pepper came in and immediately curled up on it. The dog was shivering, and Dan's legs were so cold that his knees were knocking together. He took off the soaking moccasins and buried his toes in the fur. His and Pepper's bodily heat

was already raising the temperature of the cave somewhat.

Out of his fire bag Dan took the Ojibway socket with the mouth comb, a thong with grip sticks on its ends, his drill, fire board and curls of yellow birch mixed with shredded cedar bark. This outfit carried better than the bow drill one. He soon had a fire going with it. The cave immediately became light and warm and cheerful. He broiled steaks of the tenderloin while their shivering bodies were gradually relaxing.

"Pep, this requires thought," Dan said with his mouth full of caribou. "We must have come a long way north chasing those fellows. If we miss the pond to the south, we'll have to hike on thirty-five miles to hit Lac Seul and know where we are. If the snow is deep my legs won't stand it. Sooner or later my feet will freeze, and there we are."

Pepper thumped his tail over that cheerful prospect and then stretched out his own legs to the fire. Its grateful warmth was making him sleepy. Clearly a pair of long leggings was indicated, Dan thought. He eyed the caribou skin. He had cut the hide off at the hocks. The fur over those hams was already a pair of leggings. They simply needed cutting to fit, and then sewing up.

With Dan to decide was to act. He tried the fur over his legs and marked the curved cuts that were needed to make them fit. Cutting them from the skin, he trimmed off the extra

fur and made a row of slits along the edges. He decided on a front seam, in the Iroquois fashion. He laced them up along his legs with the trimmed-off strips of rawhide and his skin immediately became hot. Dan felt his moccasins. They were on two stakes on either side of the fire and needed tending and working, lest they dry hard. When dry he put them on and said:

"Ho! Hum! A day's a day in this country, Pep! Let's turn in." He pulled the flaps of the skin over him and the dog, and was soon asleep with his feet to the fire.

The next morning blinding whiteness greeted him. The sun was up and all the snowy wastes looked alike. A sparkling blanket a foot deep had fallen during the night. Dan blinked his eyes and said:

"Ow! Snow-blindness, Pepper! You won't have it, but I will." He knew that within two hours the actinic rays striking up from the snow into the unprotected eye would render him snow-blind. Snow-blindness comes on suddenly, with a wretched nausea that takes a man's strength and makes him unable to walk. It lasts three days, during which, even if lucky enough to find a dark shelter, one can not see, and there are acute pains in the eyes from the least light.

Anxiously Dan looked about for his friend the birch tree, sticking its bare plume of twigs up out of the scrags. But this country was too fierce for them. No seeds could reach these far uplands, he reflected. Gee, he must have come a long way!

He cut a tump strap from his pack and tied it into a square bundle with thongs. They set off southward. Dan found himself continually turning into the sun, since his right leg made the longer stride. He corrected his course and they plodded on over tundra flats and rocky ridges, south and south and south.

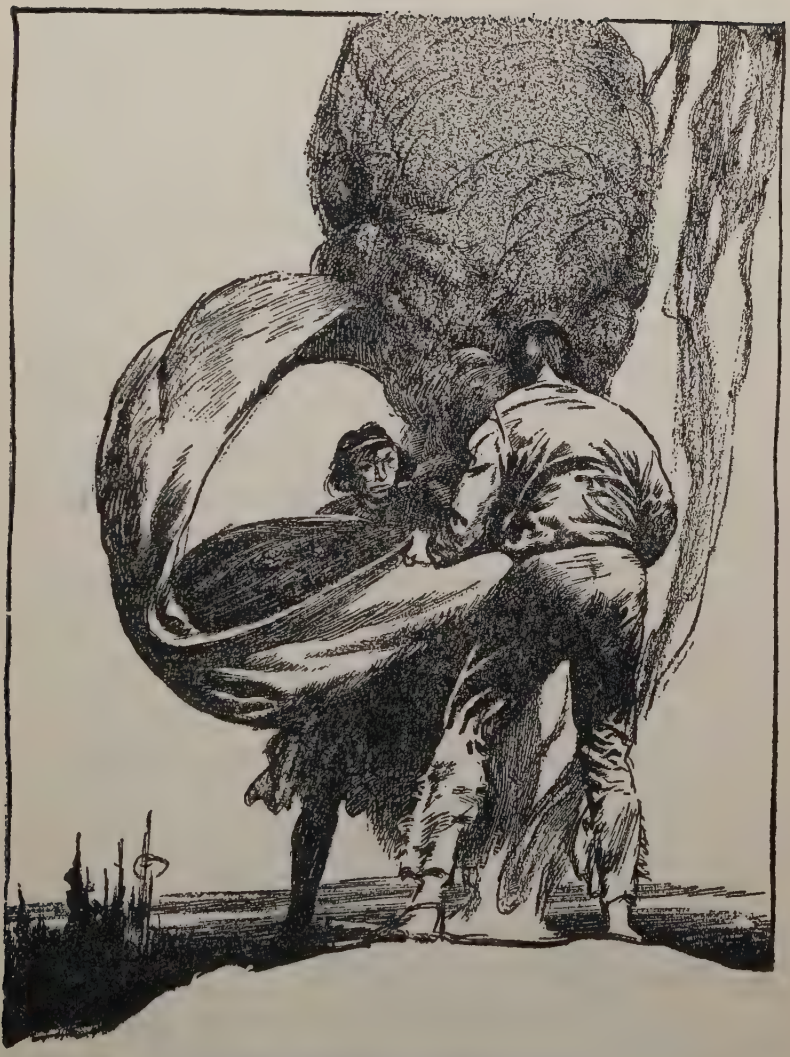
After three hours of it with no timber in sight, Dan began to worry. His eyes were smarting. He needed blinders right away; finally he spied a birch plume. This was encouraging! They were nearer timber, anyway! If he missed the pond to the south, he might have to keep on clear to the Sturgeon. The beaver-dam stream flowed west into Lac Seul.

Dan went to the birch sapling and cut from it a small rectangle that would cover his eyes. Cutting two holes in it, he bent the lower halves of the cuts till the bark stood out like small shelves at right angles to the mask. These shelves cut off the rays striking up from the snow.

When the mask was tied on with thongs he felt better. They headed west, with the sun over his shoulder. Two hours of plodding . . . then, a long distance to the north, a single puff of white smoke curled up over the horizon. Dan raised a shout of relief.

"The pond, Pep! That's Nimigosh signaling me. We're all right!"

He had not been ready yet to admit that he was worried and anxious. Dan had been lost before, plenty of times, but



"That's Nimigosh signaling me!"

always with the forest about him and it meant nothing. This time it was different; the barren grounds of the North gave Dan a stern lesson in care while he was away from landmarks.

They hurried toward the smoke puff. It appeared at regular intervals and was made by holding a skin over a smudge fire and suddenly whipping it away. The Crees had worried when they did not find him in his wigwam, and this was their practical answer to the situation.

At length the tops of black spruces came in sight. Dan reached the height of land that inclosed them and stood looking down on the pond below. He was above the marsh flat. A dense basin of evergreens filled the hollow in between. Dan plunged down into them joyfully. It was good to have his tree neighbors about him again! He knew them all, and what they were all good for.

Presently he stood on the marsh bank and waved across at Nimigosh who was tending the smudge fire. Tawabisnay and squaw were making a balloon out of a big skin.

"Whoopee!" Dan called. "Ice all right?"

They raised cries of joy. Nimigosh ran out to meet him, answering his question about the ice.

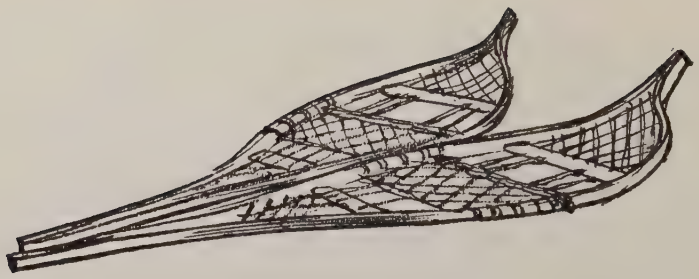
"Thanks a lot, Nimigosh!" Dan said as they gripped hands. "I was miles too far south when I saw your smoke!"

The Indian boy laughed delightedly. "Now we square, Namaqua!" he said. "You save my cousin, Memengwa; I

save you! Would be lost easy in tundra country! You got caribou?"

Tawabisnay exclaimed over it as they reached shore. "Caribou coom south already! Will be hard winter! We get rifle and lay in winter meat," he declared.

Their large wigwam was finished. Inside it Dan found a pile of iron traps from some cache that they kept here. Mastigusha was splitting boards from a thick balsam billet with an iron froe. Some of the boards were already whittled to shape as stretchers for their peltry. They used the wigwam for fur operations in the winter, Dan perceived. He borrowed a coal from the tepee and went on to his hut. Kenganowog had gone with his message, the chief told him.



Chapter XII

SNOWSHOE AND TOBOGGAN

Dan set to work immediately on his pump drill. This was used by many of the woodland tribes for both boring and fire making, and consisted of a long spindle of balsam with a yoke going over it. Two long thongs were tied to the spindle top and then led out to the yoke ends. You twirled the yoke till it wrapped the thongs around the spindle. Below the yoke went a small withe wheel, weighted with stones around its hoop. To spin the drill you shoved down on the yoke, unwinding the thongs. The flywheel wound them up, and you had but to press down again to keep the drill whirling.

Dan made this apparatus in about an hour, and then flaked at a long sliver of flint until he had a flat drill about two inches long and a quarter of an inch wide. Its wide, flat shank he lashed into a cleft in the spindle end with sinew. Setting it aside to dry and shrink hard, he brought his four toboggan boards into the wigwam and assembled them side by side.

Six flat ash strips were cut and laid across them. Then Dan began drilling pairs of holes through the strips and the planks beneath. The planks would have to be grooved where the holes came through on the under side, so that the rawhide thongs would lie flat in them and not be cut by ice.

He was all afternoon at it; but next day the wet rawhide thongs were pushed through the holes and tied tightly and the toboggan took shape as a serviceable carrier, as handy in winter as the canoe was in summer. It was about eight feet long and twenty inches wide. Dan secured an ash strip across the curl ends and tied it down to the forward brace with stout ropes of twisted rawhide. He then cut two long tamarack rails for the sides and his toboggan was finished.

It was snowing again. Dan remained at home, busily working on his snowshoes. The frames were steamed and bent into the long Cree shape, with upturned toes. Slots and holes were drilled in them for the braces and end-lashings. From the buckskin he cut a hundred feet of thong, beginning along the outside and gradually cutting more and more till only a small piece of the center was left. This babiche had to be greased and stretched before straightening it into long, flat strips of rawhide. He coiled it into a great hank, slipped this over a sapling stump, and then twisted it with a club till it sweated and stretched with the pressure.

All that snowy day Dan spent singing and weaving at his snowshoes. He had dug down to his peg in the snow and

found that the sun's shadow was already falling beyond it. The twenty-first of September had passed while he was away after that caribou. He started a new calendar stick, dating it September twenty-third to be on the safe side. It would be two weeks yet before he could start for Factory Saint Joseph. You could not hurry anything in the North! The snowshoes alone would take a week to set and harden, and then there was all his pemmican to make. Dan had already hung the strips of his tenderloin over a thong stretched under his smoke cover. He was glad of the supply of frozen ducks for fresh meat.

He began work on his snowshoe by lashing a twisted, double thong across it about three inches below the upper crossbar. An inch below this twist it crossed the frame again, made a clove hitch around the wood, and then was led down in a long slant to make a turn around the center of the lower crossbar. Up it came, in a slant to the opposite side, with a clove hitch here. It crossed an inch and a half below the stout twisted thong, then came down again to the lower crossbar and farther along it.

Now the babiche had to be weaved under and over the diagonals and cross-thongs as they passed each other. Dan's ball of rawhide would by no means do this, so he made a snowshoe spindle of a billet of white pine, slotted deeply on its sides and pointed at each end. This held about twenty feet of flat rawhide. With it he wove the web as he went up

and down and across. He then made a hexagonal punch of hard wood to set all the holes made by the crossings of the web exactly the same size.

The snowshoes took all day to make. They were double pointed, that is, the toe ends were turned up some ten inches and joined by rawhide lashings through bored holes, exactly as the tail ends were. Dan filled the toe ends with a fine webbing of gut, and his snowshoes were finished. The toe hole had been made by the twists running up around the forward crossbar from the main cross-thong of double-twisted rawhide. These turns kept it from sagging under the strain of the diagonal strips. The one missing in the center gave the toe hole.

Late in the afternoon Nimigosh called to look over the snowshoes. He had brought with him his drum and a wooden flute, at which Dan looked longingly. What a prize for the Museum! The flute was of red cedar, hollowed out after splitting and then glued together. It had six holes in pairs between the ornamental thongs that bound it together. A small wooden mouthpiece was tied to one side of the blowing hole.

"Pooty good!" the musician commented professionally on Dan's snowshoes. "In t'ree days they be shrunk hard. . . . You coom lodge. We make wild-rice feast. You can play dis?"

He tapped on the drum a lovely rhythm that reminded Dan of the Menominee corn dance. He took the drum and

imitated it. Nimigosh squatted in the wigwam and played a dance air on the flute that was syncopated by the drum taps.

"Now we go!" said Nimigosh after some ten minutes of this rehearsal. "You play lak real Injun!"

Kenganowog had returned and was seated in the big Cree wigwam when they entered. He seemed sullen and distant, and Dan could not imagine what was the matter.

"Yass; I geev your writing to Paquashwish," he said. "Him run dog team." He hunched up his shoulders and turned his back on Dan.

Memengwa came up to him. "I sorry I laugh at your medicine," she said. "You heap know! You save my life."

"That's all right, O sister," Dan said. "Your cousin saved mine. So we're quits."

She shook her head. "It was nothing to make signal fire," she insisted. "You no see um, you keep going till you reach timber."

Tawabisnay grunted assent to that, but Kenganowog only snorted. Plainly he was jealous. How like children they were in showing their feelings, Dan thought. He was embarrassed. There was already a girl at home, and he did not wish, above all things, to kindle the flames of jealousy and hatred here. These two bucks were courting Tawabisnay's girls. There was no doubt about Mastigusha and Rosebud; they showed plainly their feelings for each other. Memengwa was more wayward and difficult. She was giving Kenganowog a hard

time with his love-making, yet there was no flirtation for Dan in her eyes.

"Coom; we make wild-rice dance," Tawabisnay said.

There was a great bark bowl filled to the brim with the little brown grains. Another contained what berries they had been able to salvage from the early snow. The meat from Nimigosh's buck hung in long strips in the smoke hole. There was peace and plenty in the lodge.

The calumet was lighted with the usual ceremonies; then Tawabisnay sang a long invocation to the Great Spirit, emphasizing their trust in Him, and recounting how, in spite of the early snow, they had been able to garner their rice, for which they now wished to give thanks.

The baskets were brought to the fire and the squaw and the two girls took their places on one side, the men on the other. Dan and Nimigosh squatted with flute and drum. The girls sang the air with the flute, the men accenting every fourth beat of the drum with a resonant, *Ho!* Dan watched the pantomime eagerly. It was the well-known scrape step, their arms evidently invoking the South Wind to be kind to the rice plumes. The men were at the same time begging the North Wind not to blow the rice flat before the Indians had had time to garner it. There was a pantomime of beating with rice sticks; then they all danced sunwise around the fire and made stooping motions that were unmistakably those of planting.

"Do you plant the rice, too?" Dan asked Nimigosh, in astonishment.

"Sure!" James Henry stopped fluting long enough to say. "Acorns, too," he added later. "Soon we have nice tree of bur oak." It dawned upon Dan that the Indians were the greatest of conservationists. They were careful about beaver pups, and did not destroy any huts with dynamite as the white man did. They respected does and fawns unless they were in dire need of meat. Their fur industry kept down the predatory foxes, lynx, and all the bloodthirsty weasel tribe who killed far more than they could eat.

As combined ethnologist and assistant musician, Dan passed a profitable evening, and went home after a final cup of spruce beer. Next day he was hard at work. Lac Seul should be frozen over by this time. He was eager to be gone. He needed fur mitts of hare skin; sleeves and a hood from the caribou hide; boots made of one of his remaining wolf skins. He smoked the caribou hide by basting it into a long bag and suspending this by a tripod of poles over a ground smudge. What fat he had was mixed with acorn flour and rubbed into the hide, in place of brains. It was then grained with a rough stone and beamed by pulling it over a thick rope of thongs until it became supple.

Three days of busy sewing—then he packed his toboggan and was ready to say good-by to his Cree neighbors.

He found them gathered in the big wigwam. There was a

huge pile of Indian belongings at one side; their very finest garments; Nimigosh's drum and flute; bows, arrows, quivers; tools, bowls, and baskets contributed by the squaws. Tawabisnay lighted the peace pipe for the last time and said:

"All these are my white son's. He has given us back our daughter who was dead. We cannot do enough for him. I have spoken."

Dan knew that he could not refuse now without mortal insult. But what a collection! They seemed to have understood what he would most prize of the articles used in their daily lives.

"My thanks, O Father," he said. "But I cannot possibly take all these beautiful things with me on the toboggan. Suppose you bring them down to Nipigon Post in the spring? The Factor there will give credit, fairly, for what they are worth."

Vigorous grunts of denial came from both Tawabisnay and his squaw. They would not let him pay a cent for the collection!

"It is not I who pays, O Knisteneaux," Dan told them. "It is the Great House with the glass cases, where all these things will be kept . . ."

"Bah gosh, I lak see that house!" Nimigosh broke in excitedly. "All us Injun t'ing?"

"All the Indians," Dan said. "The Iroquois of old; the Sioux of the Plains; the Hopi and Navaho of the Southwest;

the Plateau Blackfeet and Assiniboins; the Tlingit and Kwakiutl of the tall forest, where is the big sea to the west."

"An' now us," Tawabisnay said. "It is good. We make plenty more, my son."

"Some day you will see them, Nimigosh!" Dan told their musician. "You catch plenty furs, you go to Superior Junction, and take train to my home in Minnesota. You and I, we go see the Big House!"

Nimigosh accepted the invitation with alacrity. Then the girl, Memengwa, advanced toward Dan. She carried a small bundle in her hand.

"I go weeth you, Namaqua," she said. "I your squaw . . . I sew you plenty good clo'es."

Dan noted Kenganowog looking at him with a black scowl. The girl had no love in her eyes, only a humble submissiveness. She felt that it was her duty to make this offer. Dan knew that she had been argued into it by her parents.

"Give me your hand, Memengwa. You love him?" he asked with a glance toward Kenganowog. She dropped her eyes demurely. Two big tears coursed slowly down her cheeks.

"Give me your hand, Kenganowog!" Dan said. He placed Memengwa's hand in it. "Now you two go before the blackrobe at Ogoki Post!" Dan said seriously.

Kenganowog brightened; then he shook his head glumly. "No got furs," he said, meaning that he had no money with which to buy her from Tawabisnay.

The Chief laughed. "Injun heap fool!" he said. "When want girl, geev her father canoe, blanket, gun. White man keep canoe, keep blanket, keep gun, give old preach-man two dollars for scold squaw! I geev you two dollars, Kenganowog, for four beaver skin." That was his way of telling them that no price would be asked for Memengwa, save the priest's fee. She went to him gratefully.

Kenganowog immediately became friendly and appreciative. He picked up the most precious thing he had, his rifle, and offered it to Dan.

"You take, Namaqua!" he begged. "You save my girl's life! You need him! Plenty, plenty wolves in Lac Seul and Saint Joseph country! Rabbit no find; deer all gone; caribou too beeg. Day keel *you!* Heap fool for go with only bow and club!"

"Thanks, no, Kenganowog," Dan said, refusing the rifle. "With only my knife I started, and that way I will finish. Tell me: is there water connection between the two lakes?"

"No," Kenganowog said positively. "Lac Seul—English River water; Lac Saint Joseph—Albany River water. You cross Lac Seul an' mush over Height-of-Land. No go down the lake! Bad brook there. Log jams, chute-a-pic (waterfalls). You know!"

Dan nodded. He had come up that sort of going in reaching this pond. He had no wish for more of it!

"You no stay on lake, come night!" Kenganowog warned

him. "Wolves get you; no can fightum all at once! You camp in timber; make hut of toboggan, so no can come at you but one way. Keep up plenty fire!"

It was going to be a stern trip, but Dan was bent on making it. He had months of collecting yet to do while staying at Osnaburgh House. He bade them all good-by and set off tugging at the toboggan strap with Pepper floundering in the deep snow beside him. This first day he would make a short trip of about eight miles across country to Lac Seul. He should strike it near the wild-rice swamp, if he were lucky. After that he would see what he would see. . . .

Chapter XIII

FACTORY SAINT JOSEPH

He was all alone in the great frozen North, Dan realized as he camped that night at the head of the marsh creek. A snowy owl was winging over the low hummocks of crushed rice plumes, seeking the mice that lived on the ears that were left. It was a scene of utter desolation. The black spruces around him drooped their branches with the weight of the snow; the balsams were bent over with their load. They shed a small avalanche at the lightest touch. Dan had foreseen that when he made his hood.

He left the toboggan to go hunting while there was yet light. Pepper had barked and pointed with his muzzle in that funny way he had. Dan spied a spruce grouse settling itself

for the night on a lower limb near by. Here was work for the blowgun! He unlashed it from the toboggan rail and took along its bag of darts. He could lose these without calamity, whereas an arrow in the snow was gone for good.

He ranged up within fifteen feet of the grouse, aimed the blowgun sight a few inches below the grouse's breast, and drew a full breath.

Fop! The dart sped over and buried itself deep. The grouse fluttered over to the next tree. Dan followed and aimed again, trying for its throat. It was a miss, but no matter; he loaded in another dart.

Fop! The bird fluttered again, and this time landed on the snow some twenty feet off. Pepper pounced on it, gave it a vigorous shake, and brought it proudly to Dan.

"That's enough, old fellow," he said. "We've got to snug down for the night."

He went back and unpacked the toboggan. Turning it upside down he propped up its tail end with two dead balsam saplings, broken to size by snapping them against tree trunks. The curl of the toboggan raised their roof a foot at the rear end. Dan shoveled the snow out of this area till he got down to needles. With the snow banked up on each side against a few bushy spruce boughs, they had a rude shelter that would do.

The usual way to build a fire in deep snow is to cut four or five green logs and build it on the platform thus made. Dan

had no ax, so he hunted for a large, flat stone and laid it on the needles and made a fire on this with his sticks. With bulrush roots roasting in its ashes and the spruce-grouse breast broiling over it they soon had a meal. The grouse was good eating, though resinous in taste.

Dan rolled out his bearskin bag and lay looking up at his weapons lashed to the toboggan rails. They could hear the distant howl of wolves and the yapping of foxes, but Pepper did not seem to be concerned. Dan finally decided that his war club would be sufficient for any sudden attack, and then he slid into his bag and was fast asleep.

The sun was up in the morning, but the sky looked pale and wan. Another storm was coming. Unless he was to be snowbound here he must cross without delay, Dan decided. From where he stood the creek channel twisted and turned through low hummocks of wild rice, and beyond it stretched Lac Seul in a vast, white expanse. It was quiet, at last, but as dangerous as ever. He could just see the low Laurentian Hills across the lake. They were twenty miles away. Once out on the lake, his horizon would be but seven miles from the height of his eyes. He would be out of sight of land in every direction. It was essential to have clear weather or he would wander in circles out on the lake without getting anywhere.

"Pep, we'll have to get organized for this," Dan told his dog. "We may have to build a fire more than once before we ever get across that thing!"

He put together all the best coals from their breakfast fire and made some charcoal by quenching the ends of brands in the snow. With these piled over the coals, and the heap banked tight with ashes and covered with a small hood of birch bark, the hearthstone was ready to be placed under the curl of his toboggan. Dan packed it with all his belongings and then collected a bundle of dead pine fagots for firewood.

They set off down the slough. The sky grew steadily grayer. Pepper could not help with the toboggan; it was all he could do to flounder along beside Dan, belly-deep in the snow. Halfway down the creek they spied their great bur oak and Dan mushed over to it. Oak coals! What woodsman has not blessed their hot, staying power! It was worth the hour spent in visiting shade-killed saplings from the parent tree and lopping off the tough, hard branches.

Dan added them to his store and they went out on the main lake. The islets that he had tried to reach before were some five miles below, the last visible land on this side. After an hour of mushing, the tips of their spruces sank out of sight. He was as alone in the world as if in the center of an arctic sea. Flat, level, white, and silent as death, the vast white horizon rim curved around him. It was then that Dan's spirit reached up a timid hand to the Great Spirit like a child to his father. He alone could give the stout heart and the unfaltering courage to face this and see it through.

"Father! Guide me! Help me!" Dan sang an old croon of

the Arapaho. He tugged at the strap and called cheerily to the laboring Pepper. This snowbound lake was as thirsty as the desert! There was no way to get a drink save by using his precious firewood to heat a round stone buried in the coals on his hearth. "The tea ball," Dan called it, in fun. He filled the elm trough with snow and dropped the sizzling-hot stone into it. In a little while there would be a drink for them both, but it would have to be taken promptly. In a very few minutes it would start to freeze again—and it cost just so many sticks out of the bundle!

For lunch they chewed pemmican straight. It was very nourishing and filling. Pepper gobbled his portion in three bites, but Dan munched at his slowly, not stopping to rest, for it was essential to make the whole twenty miles to shore that day, if it could possibly be done. Even five miles from shore, the least haze would cut him off from all sense of direction and send him wandering in circles on the lake.

Nature went right on with her grand processes, unmindful, unheeding of Dan and his mortal need. By mid-afternoon it had thickened up and the white line of the hills to the north disappeared; only the wind was left to guide him. Dan's song for help and courage rose as he looked about him. A circle of limitless white, under a leaden bowl of gray bounded him on all sides. Even that single look around nearly threw him out of reckoning. The toboggan seemed pointing the wrong way when he looked at it again.

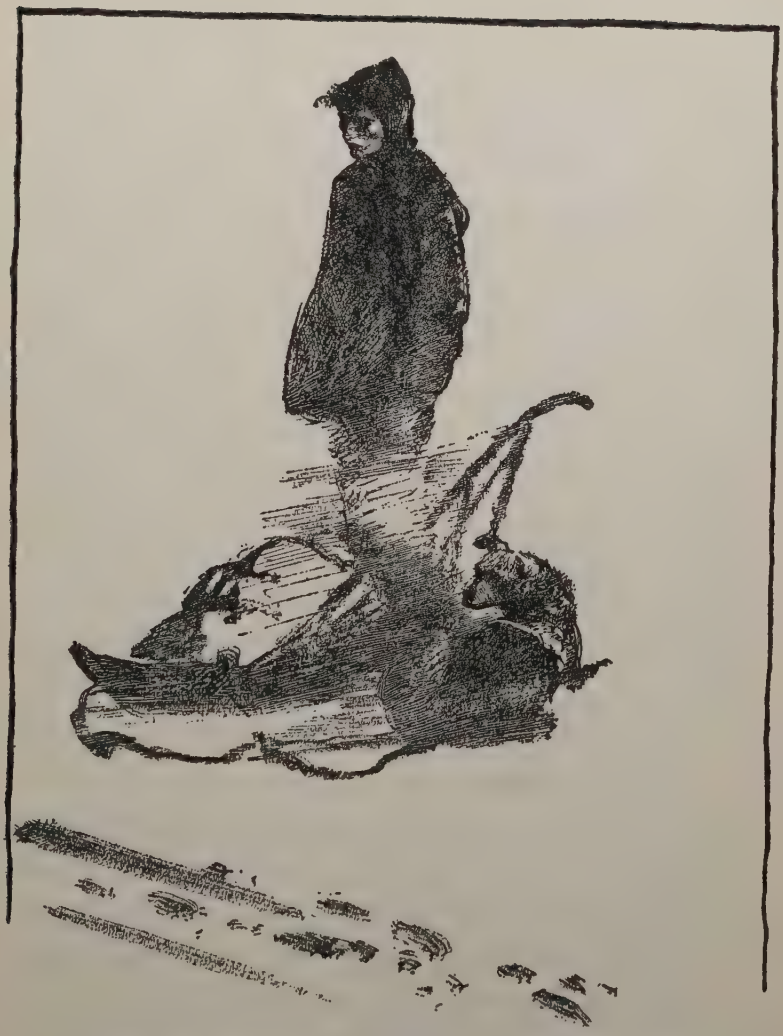
Feeling the wind in his face, Dan pushed on rapidly. Pepper fell behind, his tongue panting out.

"Come! Hep! Mush, Pep!" called Dan anxiously. This was no time to be giving out!

Then the wind fell. Stripping off his fur mitt, Dan wet a finger and held it up. The whole finger stung with the cold, instantly. He could not decide which was the coldest side. He dared not look around the horizon. One turn would bewilder him completely! He pushed on, blindly. The clouds were lowering black overhead. Something stern and menacing was coming—something deadly to him!

Far over the northern rim of snow appeared a faint mirage. There were little, almost indistinguishable, dark points which could not be made out clearly but they suggested treetops. Dan let out a wild cry of joy and dragged the toboggan fiercely on. Land! The forest! If he could only reach it before ——

He raced on, his breath coming in huge gulps. It was oh, so far away! At least seven miles as seen from his height. He did not pray to the Great Spirit to hold up this storm for a brief while, so that he could get nearer. That would be too bold—the white man's way! The Great Spirit never interfered with Nature's movements. These went on under His inexorable laws—which it behooved man to respect! Instead, Dan prayed for strength of spirit, for the driving force that would enable him to win out. Pep howled piteously and



Across his path lay the broad crease of a toboggan

bogged down in the snow. Dan put him on the toboggan. Snow was already falling. Gradually a white haze closed in the horizon around him. The trees on the distant north shore, once distinct, disappeared. Then the wind came, blowing the flakes in great sheets all about him. Dan had hoped that a steady wind would come before he lost sight of shore, but it did not. Now he was not certain from which direction it was blowing. It might be northeast, it might be southeast; either one could come with a blizzard such as this storm was developing into. He chose northeast as the most likely, especially as it blew bitter cold. Dan pushed on, head down, his free arm guarding his eyes. For an hour nothing happened and he was becoming deadly tired. He ought to be near shore, now. It was not five miles off when he had last sighted it!

Then he stopped dead, as a sickening wave of fright overwhelmed him. Across his path lay the broad crease of a toboggan, already half buried in light, flaky crystals. It was his own track; he had made a big circle!

Dan collected his wits as he sat on the toboggan load. Pepper cowered against him. They needed shelter and that right soon! This wind stole heat like a thief. Already he could feel his feet getting numb. He tugged at the frozen snowshoe thongs, kicked them off his feet and began to dig vigorously, throwing the snow in an embankment on each side. After a time the black, glassy surface of the lake ice came in sight. Dan kept on digging until he had made a trough as large as the

toboggan was wide, facing into the eye of the wind. It scoured down, sweeping out the snowflakes as they fell. Then he unpacked the toboggan and turned it upside down, with its curl at the head of the trough and its board rising at a long slant. On it he shoveled snow to weight it down, and then, under the rear end to windward, he propped up a snowshoe and banked snow against it. When that whole side was finished he propped the second shoe on the other side and piled up the snow with his hands and arms—anything to get it done and crawl in out of this bitter wind!

He was just in time. The cold wind searched through his fur seams like a knife blade. His feet were numb. His hands refused to move at his will when he dragged the bearskin robe inside, cut its tying-thong and rolled it out in the hut. Slapping the snow off his skin garments, Dan wriggled into the bag. His head rested against Pepper, who had curled up shivering at the back of the hut.

Gradually bodily heat returned. Dan felt tired and drowsy, but this was no time to rest. A great drift of white snow was already forming at the entrance. Swirls of flakes were drifting in and settling on the bag. The hut needed closing in, even at its leeward end. Dan dashed out and brought the hearthstone and faggots in. Uncovering its bark roof, his bare hands told him that a nest of coals down inside still lived. Routing out Pepper, he set it up near the head of the hut.

Dan was puzzling out a way to close in the open rear of the

hut when a sudden electric fear shot through him. Suppose his sleeping bag should get frozen to the ice under him? It was stuck fast by the heat that his body had sent through it on the under side, but not so fast that he could not get it loose again by carefully rolling it up. He swept the snowdrift out on the floor to make a mat over the ice and then rolled out the bag again, relieved and thankful. Dan sang as he studied the rear opening. It was four feet high and not over twenty inches wide at the top, opening to two feet at the bottom. The snow was already answering the question of the bottom, for it was filling fast and only needed digging out straight inside. For the top, birch bark would answer. Dan undid the package around his frozen meat supply and made a wall at the lower end with the frozen chunks. If the bark had a frame, it would withstand the wind. Up over his head he could just see the outlines of his bows and club and quiver of arrows. They were lashed to the side rails of the toboggan and partly buried in the packed snow. He had nothing to fear from wind cracks now, for the outside of his hut was a mere rounded hummock. He dug out and cut loose the weapons. Out of his pouch he took sinew thread and a bone awl. Working fast, he soon had two long arrows sewed down each side of the bark and then a third one across the top. The wind would play havoc with any loose edges of bark. This frame he lashed to the snowshoes and the tail board of the toboggan. There was left but a small opening about a foot high.

It immediately became warmer inside, but it was thick with smoke, for the fire was starting on a couple of faggots over the coals, and that always meant a period of acrid smoke. Dan fanned it to a flame; then he rolled back the bag to form a seat. He set his boiling stones to heat around the fire. An hour later he and Pep were dining on a thick soup of pemmican and bulrush-root flour. After banking the fire, he turned in, warm and full-fed.

It was stifling and almost dark inside the hut when he awoke. Pepper had moved over to a lower corner of the fur bag, crowding his feet out of the way. Dan felt dizzy and wretched and gasped for air. The snow had closed up his ventilation opening entirely. A dull, white glow showed that it was daylight outside. Dan turned out and thrust his mittened hand up through the opening as far as it would go, still without reaching the air. Then he started digging his way out. It took ten minutes of steady work before a rush of cold, fresh air and a flurry of snow smote his face. He breathed deeply until he felt better. Then he continued digging, joined now by Pepper, and between them they cleared a deep tunnel to the door. It was still gray and overcast outside so that he could see nothing of the shore. The flakes came down as hard as ever. He was stormbound; for how long he could not tell.

Dan rolled up the sleeping bag and sat on it, inspecting the fire. It was dead cold, but on the underside of two charred

faggots tiny specks of live coal shone dully. Dan put them together and blew softly and steadily until the hut was full of smoke and he had fire started. He made more pemmican soup, husbanding his fuel, for there was very little left. Then there was nothing to do but wait.

But an active outdoorsman like Dan could not long remain idle. He soon bethought him of the ice underneath. Surely Lac Seul's ice could not yet be more than three inches thick. There would be fishing, and fresh water! Dan dug out the trench in front of the opening, and began picking at the ice with his hunting knife. The chips flew, and presently water spurted up from below. Dan took a long drink and called Pepper to do likewise. Then he enlarged the hole and got some tackle from his pouch. Thawing a bit of fresh meat over the fire, he baited a hook and lowered it.

"Whee!" he cried, after some minutes of watching, "look at the whitefish, Pep!" A school of the dark green bodies passed by underneath. Then there was the flash of a silver side, and one of them shot up to nose around the bait. A second fish chased him; the first grabbed the hook and made off.

"*Ying!*" whooped Dan, yanking up on the line. A silver fish a foot long lay flopping on the snow. Pepper pounced on the fish and shook it as though he were a terrier. That was his stunt, the dog decided. As the fish continued to bite, he stood by and seized each one by the head, shaking it and

dropping it in the snow, only to wait eagerly for the next. All day long the fun kept up, and over the slow embers of the fire a delicious mess of the little steaks was roasted. Being stormbound was vexing; but there were always compensations—if you knew where to look for them!

The sun was blazing over dazzling snow when Dan turned out on the morning of the third day for a look-see. The storm had broken and a sharp northwest wind had set in. There was the shore, not five miles off, and a lopped spruce bordering on a cove told him where the entrance to the fur trail to Lake Saint Joseph began.

Dan shook his head at all that level, sparkling radiance. It was deadly to the eyes, far worse than the rolling Barren Grounds. Lac Seul would get him yet! He got the bark mask out of one of his baskets, opened its little shelves and put it on. It would take two hours to dig himself out and mush over to that marker spruce. During that time the lake could easily strike him blind without those "glasses."

Not until they had reached the timber did he dare take them off. The trail was marked with ax blazes and led him up to barren heights of land, where tall cairns piled up by the Indians still showed him the way. They crossed the brook that ran like a tail into the east end of Lac Seul. The brook had spruce swamp backwaters that led some of the maps to connect the two lakes. The trail avoided these. It plunged down into a deep, dark forest that was an excellent lurking-

place for wolves and came out on Lake Saint Joseph whose surface spread out like a long, white funnel between two walls of trees. Dan sang happily as he mushed along with the toboggan following easily after all that pulling and hauling up and down the slopes. Thirty-five miles to go to reach Osnaburgh House! He had only one more camp to make.

As the day ended, he headed for the north bank of the lake. To be attacked out here by a wolf pack was death, Kenganowog had warned him. This was "Hungry Land." Ragged and slender black spruces filled the forests; poplars and birches were now scarce. Under the snow were masses of great granite boulders, filled between with forest mould.

Those boulders were admirable for defense, Dan perceived. A short distance in from the lake he selected a cleft between two of them, unpacked his toboggan and roofed over the cleft with it. Shoveling out what snow there was, he made a large fireplace of stones assembled around his hearthstone. The embers on it soon leaped to a blaze and Dan spent the last of his daylight in gathering firewood, and yet more firewood. He might have to keep this fire up all night, if attacked. He was about ten miles from the Factory, he judged. That lonely spot would mean nothing to prowling wolf packs.

Dan barricaded the back of his hut stoutly and then broiled whitefish steaks over the leaping fire. He melted snow in the elm-bark bowl, put in a quantity of wild rice and boiled it with stone after stone. The moon came up, cold and silvery

over a silent world. The brilliant flashes of the aurora stabbed the sky overhead. This was the Northland, still and solemn and mystic with those ghostly lights—and cruel!

Far off to the west, the voice of the North was raised in the long-drawn "*A-ooo-ooo-ooo*" of the great timber wolf. They were pursuing some luckless deer that had dared to linger here too long. Dan felt an immense pity for him as he listened. Where could he run that those devils could not follow? Stabbing with his slender hoofs in the deep snow, what chance for escape had he from those relentless hunters?

The deer was heading for the lake, where he would at least have level surface to gallop over. Nearer came the howl of the wolves. Dan prepared for war. They would scent his fire and abandon the deer for him, if the deer came this way. As his first act he went out and cut a long pole to which he could lash his hunting knife. He stuck his arrows with the smooth, bone points in a row to one side of his hut. Those with flint heads had not enough penetration for this work. Across the front of the hut he piled all his firewood as a barricade. He could feed the fire by tossing billets to it without going outside his shelter. Dan strung his heavy, red-cedar bow and placed his war club handy. With Pepper inside the hut beside him they waited and listened.

A-ooo-ooo-ooo! The deer had reached the lake bank, some distance west of Dan's camp. Then for a long time there was silence. A dog fox yapped. A great barred owl, attracted by

the firelight, settled in a spruce near by and uttered his ghostly: *Hoo-hoo! Hoo-hoo! Hoo-hoo-awgh!* Minutes went by as he repeated his call at regular counts of sixty. He, too, was watching for his prey.

Pepper growled and his hair rose. Dan quieted him and listened. There were rustlings now in the forest. Presently two green eyes flashed at him, reflecting the firelight. Dan could just make out the gray shape of a large timber wolf looking at them. Then there came more flashing eyes, more and more. Pepper, taking courage from the barricade, snarled and barked at them. The wolves circled the edge of the firelight, some creeping forward with mincing steps, others squatting with their red tongues lolling out. They were tired of chasing that deer; here was meat, and right at bay! They looked like shaggy gray pigs, with their long muzzles, furry chops, and little slanting eyes. But they were revengeful pigs, greedy, hungry with the bitter hunger of the North.

There came a scratching of nails on the curl of the toboggan at the rear, the click of paws advancing over the roof. It sagged under the wolf's weight as he reached the forward end, directly over Dan's head. Dan kept his arrow trained on a big fellow sneaking in close behind the fire. Pepper snarled at him savagely, but he knew better than to spring out. Dan listened warily to the one overhead. A chorus of howls resounded; it was the signal for attack. The bow twanged. An arrow pierced the big fellow charging in. Dan

dropped the bow to pick up the spear and drive it into the wolf overhead, who had leaped down with a turning spring just in front of the fire. He yelped as the steel struck him. The pack rushed furiously on their two fallen comrades. They tore them to pieces not five feet away. Dan managed to reach out and stab another in the riot of bellows and snarls that ensued. In a few seconds not a wolf was left in front of the hut. They could hear them snapping and growling among themselves out in the timber.

"O. K., Pep! They may have us—but we've got *them!*" Dan laughed as they relaxed. "Neither of us has a bite or a scratch!"

Silence: for so long a period that Dan began to hope they had gone away. They hadn't! One by one they began to come back. They were waiting for his fire to die down. Dan decided to get out and risk gathering some more wood. He had hardly got his shoulder out from the hut before there came a swift rush from the rear and a wolf charged headlong over the toboggan and fell into the fire in front. Before he could turn, Dan had wounded him with a single stab of the spear and the pack rushed in to finish him, in the same way they had the other two.

After that there were no more attacks. One by one Dan fed the precious billets of firewood from the barricade until there were no more left. The pack was still there, waiting. Dan longed for dawn. To make matters worse the moon was

setting. Pepper had barked himself hoarse, but the big fellows just sat there, watching keenly for the least opening. Little by little they drew nearer. Dan would watch one, to find that meanwhile another had stolen up to a new vantage point. It looked like a concerted rush sooner or later. . . . It would come when his last flame flickered and went out.

Dan tried yelling. It was only ten miles to the Factory. Sound would carry far on a night like this. Again and again he raised his cupped hands and shouted *Help!* at the top of his voice. Only the silent hills answered him.

The moon set. The stars shone overhead, brilliant and cold and without pity. They were part of Nature, part of a great system of worlds and suns which moved on their way utterly unmindful of man and his miseries. Only God was real; only God could pity and be merciful and just! Dan crooned the low death chant of the Arapaho. He saw the last flames preparing to lick around a smoldering brand and vanish. The pack had inched in, ever nearer. Could he and Pep survive that last dash at close quarters? Only God could know the outcome of that! Dan held his spear with tense hands as a huge wolf rose slowly, his mane bristling. Pepper, snarling fiercely, gathered for a spring to meet him.

Just then, from up on the hill, came the red flame and sharp whip of a rifle. The bullet struck at almost the same instant, and the fire sparks flew up in showers. The wolves shrank back. That rifle went on shooting, for it was a re-

peater. The light of a lantern shone down the trail. Dan shouted with joyous relief in his tones. More shots rang out. A wolf howled as the rest of the pack vanished like ghosts into the timber. Twinkling lights came bobbing down through the timber.

"*Halloo!* Who's there?" shouted a voice.

"I—Dan Picket!" Dan replied.

"Dan?" cried the voice from the hill. "Dan! Oh, Dan! It's your father calling!" There was a floundering of snowshoes in the timber. Dan yelled back with joy.

"Hoot, mon! That's fair grrand, noo!" called a Scotch voice, evidently that of the Factor. The lights bobbed steadily down toward Dan. But ahead of them down the hillside rushed a man waving a rifle, and in a second more Dan was in his father's arms.

"Son! Let's look at you! What do you *mean* by scaring me to death this way?" Doctor Pickett cried out delightedly. He held Dan off at arm's length and studied him affectionately. The hot rifle still smoked in his left hand; he wore hunting boots, fur-lined canvas jacket, and a ten-gallon hat. Dan faced him grinning, his black eyes merry within the fur hood. His bow with arrow partly setting the string and held there with his thumb was in his left hand. Both were quite ready to shoot if the wolves came prowling back. Pepper, prancing around them both, gave no hint of it.

"You look like a Déné or an Eskimo, Dan!" Doctor Pickett

laughed. "Made up those skins yourself, I'll bet," he added with a professional eye on the seams, which were by no means the fine stitch of Indian squaws. "Bow and arrows too—you would! I see you had your knife left. Anything else?"

"My belt and my bathing trunks, Father," Dan said. "We made a beaming tool out of Pepper's collar buckle. Everything else came out of the forest around Lac Seul."

"Splendid! Why didn't you hike back to the railroad like a Christian?" the Doctor demanded jovially.

"It wouldn't do, Father, my feet were too tender, at first." Dan grinned and went on: "Far better to make a new outfit and push on for here. I was all right after I had made my first bow and shot a hare with it. Here it is."

He pulled the light bow out of the hut and showed it. It still had the original thong made of two strips of tough leather cut from his belt.

"It was a fascinating life, matching my wits against Nature as the Indians do," Dan said. "At times it was rather exciting."

" 'Twere pulling the verra whiskers of Death, yoong mon, every day o't!" the Factor put in severely. He had come up and was listening. "Your father and I and Factor McGillivray at Nipigon were fair worrited. My Indians found the wreck of a canoe, but we thought that some sport had let it go adrift, as those gillies are always doing. He'd probably gone back to the railroad, so I sent oot no search parties."

"Factor MacTavish, Dan," Doctor Pickett introduced them. "I took the first transcontinental to Winnipeg when I got McGillivray's letter. Then the local to Superior Junction, and I came right over by dog team. I've been here two days, Son. We were out in the storm yesterday, and the day before, looking for you."

"That's too bad, Father!" Dan said humbly. "I was all right. I was out on Lac Seul, then. I'd built a hut of my toboggan and was catching whitefish through the ice."

They both laughed. There really had been nothing to worry about with this resourceful youngster! Their faces grew grave as Dan unfolded his story; the fight for life on the lake, the fight for bare existence on shore, the battle with the buck, the battle with the wolves over his carcass, the raid of the wolverine that reduced them to poverty again. . . .

"By Heaven, you did well to come through at all, Dan!" Doctor Pickett broke in to exclaim.

Dan grinned. "Wait. I'm coming to the best part of it," he said. "My Cree Indian collection——"

"*Your what!*" Pickett shouted, amazed.

Dan told them of the move to the pond, after killing the wolverine, the Cree camping ground there, and his friendship with Tawabisnay's clan.

Doctor Pickett nodded with understanding. "It would be like them to use that beaver pond instead of the main lake,"

he commented. "You did well too, Dan, not to attempt anything on it with that small canoe."

"That's just it, Father," Dan said earnestly. "And I do want to say this: It was the Great Spirit—'who sends all good things from above,' as Tawabisnay says—who brought me through all this. He is the most real thing in this world, I'm telling you! When a fellow is all alone, it is He only who gives the wits and courage to do the right thing. I might have gotten rattled and done any number of foolish things that would have cost me my life, had it not been for Him."

"Fine . . . fine, Son," Doctor Pickett said soberly. "I went through it myself, long ago, down on those southwestern deserts. It takes a spell all alone to find Him. . . . Well, I suppose we'd better go back by the lake to the Factory," he added after a time. "Mr. MacTavish has been most generous in helping me. We heard the wolves howling and started out immediately."

Dan took the hint and promptly began packing his toboggan. They questioned him as each article went on it, and were told its story. Last of all he put the hearthstone under the curl with a heap of live coals on it, banked with ashes and covered with bark.

"You never can tell anything about this country," he said, gathering sticks. "It might start to snow at any time while we are out on the lake. You've no idea how it stops a fellow, right there!"

"By George, you're right!" Doctor Pickett exclaimed. "Anything can happen in ten miles. I'm so used to mountains and clear skies."

They mushed along, Doctor Pickett helping Dan haul the toboggan with a feeling that in this country he was the tenderfoot and his son the old-timer.

"Déné Indian model, Dan," he said, looking at the snowshoes. "The Crees use the bent-double frame. Where did you learn it?"

"Saw a pair in the Museum, Father. Now, about my collection at the pond . . ."

The two walked on, talking over Dan's winter work at the Post, heedless of direction.

Gradually Lake Saint Joseph widened. The Factor kept them cannily close to the north shore. At length Osnaburgh House came in sight, a collection of log houses with snowy roofs under the stars. It occupied a large clearing above the lake bank. A few tents and canvas tepees, covered with spruce boughs, were pitched here and there on the edge of the forest.

"Yon are no-good Indians, yoong mon," the Factor told Dan. "Ye'll visit the inland camps on snowshoes to get the genuine artifacts."

He was proud of that scientific word, which meant the things the Indians made. He had, no doubt, picked it up from Doctor Pickett, but all Scots love to be thought intellectual.

This man's hobby, it developed, was collecting biographies of the various obscure Factors who had made the Hudson's Bay Company the great organization which it was, from the times of Kelsey and Mackenzie and Frazer, down to Lord Selkirk, and on to the present time.

Indians and dogs came down to greet their landing. They hauled the toboggan up to the threshold of Osnaburgh House and Dan's long trip from Fort Frances was over. He went inside, into the great living-room, with its roaring log fire and Scottish furniture brought by ship and canoe from home. Dan had to strip off his furs immediately, it seemed so hot! For an hour he sat entertaining them with his adventures and listening to the Factor's tales of the Posts. His tanned body was sweating with the heat.

When it came time to turn in, Dan said, "I think I'll just bed up in my sleeping bag outside, Father. You know how it is; a fellow just can't sleep in a house after a long time outdoors."

Doctor Pickett yawned comfortably. "Suit yourself, Son. I guess there's a woodshed or something for shelter. You can't imagine what a relief it is to have you safe! I'll get some sleep tonight."

Dan went out and rolled out his bag in the woodshed. Pepper curled up beside him under his wolf skin. It would take gradual breaking in for them to get used to houses again.

Next morning the dog team was waiting for Doctor Pickett

outside the woodshed. Its eight Malemutes snarled hostilely at Pepper, who growled back and kept just out of reach of their longest traces. An Indian guide stood grinning at Dan as he held the plow handles of a long, stout sled. It was piled with robing fur.

Doctor Pickett came out. "Sorry I can't stay even a day, Dan," he said. "I'm due to speak in Washington next week." He handed Dan some money. "You'll need an outfit of clothes and everything before you go among the Indians," he said. "Can't do better than to buy what they have right here. Well . . . have yourself a good time!"

"I will, Father. Those things I made, I'm going to keep for my private collection," Dan said with a grin. "I'll come out in the spring. Ought to see something of their canoe life. I'll pick up Tawabisnay's things at Nipigon House."

Doctor Pickett said good-by to Factor MacTavish. "You'll keep him out of any more trouble, sir?" he laughed.

"Hoot mon! The lad took himself out of mickle tr-rouble with naught but a knife and a pair o' breeks, I'm thinkin'!" chortled the Factor.

"That he did! Fellow from Boston once tried it; but he came out looking so fat and white-skinned that I don't think he did much," Doctor Pickett replied. With that he gripped Dan's hand.

" 'By, Son! *You* certainly did it!" He got on the sled and tucked the furs around himself. The guide cracked his whip

and the dogs tugged in unison at the traces. Off down the bank they went. Dan and Pepper stood watching until the sled had streaked far across Lake Saint Joseph and was lost to sight in the forest opposite. Then he turned about ready to take up his winter's work.

THE END